Hafa Adai!

COVID-19 samples sent in to CDC ID'd as omicron variant. PAGE 3
Committees given 2 weeks to come up with impeachment rules. PAGE 5

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Saipan Tribune

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXII, Issue No. 26

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577 new cases ID'd in 3 days

A combined 577 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in the CNMI, based on three separate news reports from the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. that were issued late Thursday night, Friday, and Saturday, bringing the CNMI's total to 5,891 since March 26, 2020. The vaccination statuses of these 577 cases are still pending verification.

The CHCC report on Thursday night said that 261 individuals had been confirmed positive for COVID-19, all of them identified on Feb. 2, 2022. A total of 172 were identified via contact tracing, 76 via community testing, and 13 via travel testing. Of this total, five were identified on Tinian and four on Rota.

This was followed by another report on Friday, reporting 112 additional cases that were identified on Feb. 2, 2022. Fifty-six were identified via contact tracing, 47 via community testing, and nine via travel testing. Three of the new cases were identified on Tinian.

On Saturday, CHCC issued another news release, saying 204 new cases were added to the CNMI's total. Of the 204 cases, 153 were identified on

See 577 on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 6:15pm, Feb. 6, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Fully Vaccinated: **99.7%**

Days since last community transmission: **2**

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	37,783
Fully Vaccinated:	36,664
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,321
Fully Vaccinated:	5,165
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,131

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	34,610	1,503[1]	36,113
Recovered	27,565	767	28,332
Active	5,982	1,503	7,485
Deaths	296	0	296

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	5,314	577[2]	5,891
Traced via Travel Screening	580	23	603
Traced via Community Screening	4,734	554	5,288
Deaths	23	0	23

[1]2/6=344; 2/5=397; 2/4=762
[2]2/5=204; 2/4=112; 2/3=261

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

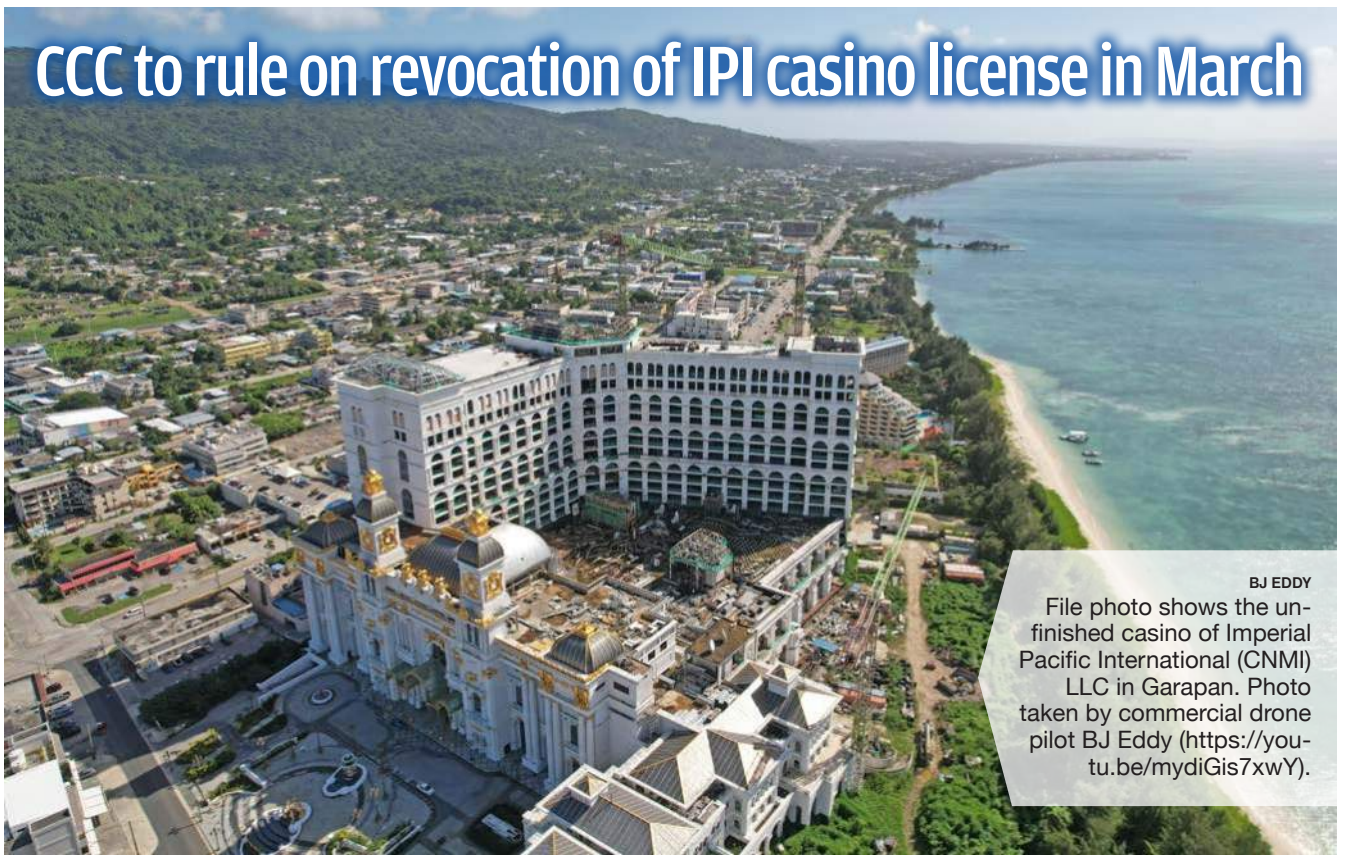
Source: Office of the Governor

Manpower agency chief sentenced to 21 months in prison for visa fraud scheme

Alejandro Tumandao Nario, 65, a Filipino citizen and a CNMI permanent resident, was sentenced in the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands to 21 months imprisonment for fraud and misuse of visas (visa fraud) , according to a

See MANPOWER on Page 4

CCC to rule on revocation of IPI casino license in March



BJ EDDY
File photo shows the unfinished casino of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC in Garapan. Photo taken by commercial drone pilot BJ Eddy (https://youtu.be/mydiGis7xwY).

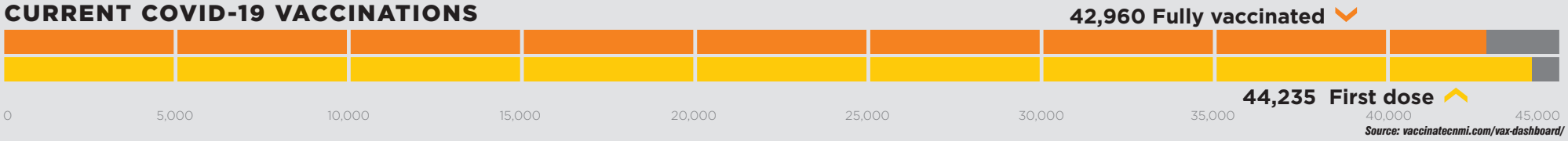
The CNMI's Commonwealth Casino Commission is planning to hold hearings in March at which a decision will be made on whether to revoke the exclusive casino license held by Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) in Saipan.

CCC executive director Andrew Yeom revealed the plan during a recent meeting with the embattled casino operator, which has failed to fulfill five enforcement actions issued last year.

"We are going to set hearing dates for those and we're thinking by the end of March," Yeom said, noting that exact dates are yet to be determined. "We are consolidating the five enforcement actions and will seek the revocation of

See CCC on Page 4

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Source: vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/

INSIDE

LOCAL
Saipan resident Robert "Winston" Posegate serves overseas without going off-island.

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BUSINESS
That bleak jobs report the White House had been bracing for never arrived Friday.

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ASIA
Residents of two villages in Myanmar said government soldiers have torched hundreds of houses.

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Local

Yumul: It was an honor to work with IPI as CEO

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Ray Yumul said it was a pleasure and honor working with Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC as its chief executive officer for a year.

Yumul

In his resignation letter Tuesday addressed to IPI Human Resources director Redie Dela Cruz, Yumul said he is officially notifying the company of his resignation effective on that day.

"I wish the staff all the best," said the former Saipan senator in the letter that he also forwarded to *Saipan Tribune* last Thursday.

He said he will be available to transition his duties to whomever will take charge of IPI per his contract.

Yumul did not indicate the reason for his resignation.

The IPI board of directors informed their employees and stakeholders Wednesday that, after serving a one-year term as CEO, Yumul has resigned. The IPI board said they are grateful for the contributions Yumul had made during his tenure.

At the Commonwealth Casino Commission's monthly board meeting last week, Thursday, Yumul lost his temper about the removal of the tower cranes at IPI's casino/resort project site in western Garapan, telling CCC board chair Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero that he can "go to hell" in reaction to comment the chairman made about the cranes. Yumul, however, later apologized to the board.

Yumul told *Saipan Tribune* after the meeting that so many local politicians benefitted from IPI and now he's cleaning up their mess that he did not start.

CCC executive director Andrew Yeom told *Saipan Tribune* Wednesday that CCC never granted IPI's application for Yumul to be its CEO.

COVID-19 samples sent in to CDC ID'd as omicron variant

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. and the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force recently received confirmation that multiple COVID-19 samples sent in to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were identified as the omicron variant, B.1.1.529.

Of the 64 samples sequenced in the batch sent Jan. 12, 2022, 43 were identified as the omicron variant and 21 as the delta variant. The samples in this batch were collected from Dec. 20, 2021, to Jan. 10, 2022. The first sample that was identified as omicron was collected on Dec. 20, 2021.

The CHCC regularly communicates with the CDC and sends COVID-19 specimens to the CDC for genetic sequencing. As of Jan. 29, 2022, 99% of samples sequenced in the United States were identified as omicron.

According to the CDC, preliminary data suggest that omicron may cause more mild disease, although some people may still have severe disease, need hospitalization, and could die from the infection with this variant. Even if only a small percentage of people with omicron infection need hospitalization, the large volume of cases could overwhelm the health care system.

Persons infected with the omicron variant can show symptoms similar to previous variants. The severity of symptoms can be affected by COVID-19 vaccination status, other health conditions, age, and history of prior infection. Individuals who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines and get COVID-19 are less likely to develop serious illness than those who are unvaccinated and get COVID-19.

The CNMI is equipped to fight omicron. COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, and testing are readily available.

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and the CHCC continue to encourage residents to get their booster shot if they are eligible. Walk-ins are accepted at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center, Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6pm, and Saturday, from 8am to 4pm To register for or a COVID-19 vaccine booster or for more information, call (670) 682-7468 or visit www.vaccinatecnmi.com.

With omicron's increased transmissibility, continue to live COVID-19 safe: follow the 3 W's (wear a well-fitting mask, wash your hands, watch your distance); stay at home as much as possible; limit your contact with others; clean or disinfect surfaces frequently; monitor your symptoms; cover coughs/sneezes; and get tested for COVID-19.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should stay home and isolate when they are sick (except to get medical care), even if they do not have symptoms; rest; stay hydrated; and can take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, to relieve symptoms.

Individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and live COVID-19 safe (except to get medical care or get tested for COVID-19). Other options include seeing their health care provider or calling the CHCC Tele-Triage hotline at (670) 233-2067. Learn more on how to live COVID-19 safe at www.staysafecnmi.com/livecovidsafe.

Individuals can get tested at the Marianas Resort community-based testing. The CBT schedule is available at https://covidtesting.chcc.health. Individuals can also get tested at the Koblerville COVID-19 Community Center, which is open seven days a week, from 8am to 4pm (closed from noon to 1pm).

For medical emergencies, call 911. Seek emergency medical attention if someone is showing any of these signs: trouble breathing; persistent pain or pressure in the chest; new confusion; inability to wake or stay awake; pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone.

Call CHCC contact tracers for concerns regarding a possible exposure to a positive case or for referral to get assessed for monoclonal antibody treatments at (670) 286-1710, 286-1711, 285-1942, 287-1652, and 287-1683.

For mental health support and coping skills, call (670) 284-0843 or 284-0847, every day, from 8:30am to 3:30pm.

For more information regarding general COVID-19 response protocols, call the COVID-19 Infoline at (670) 488-0211, every day, from 8am to 8pm. ***(CHCC)***

Public warned of rough seas

A small craft advisory is in effect from 6am today, Monday, to 6pm Wednesday.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, northeast winds of 20 to 25 knots with gusts of up to 30 knots, and seas of 8 to 10 feet are expected Monday night in coastal waters of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. Conditions will be hazardous to small craft.

Winds will remain fresh to strong due to the descending shearline from the north and trade-wind confluence from the southeast. Combined seas of 7 to 8 feet will increase to between 8 and 10 feet Monday night, becoming hazardous to small craft as well.

Inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, should avoid navigating in hazardous conditions. ***(PR)***

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CNMI is No. 3 in highest case rates in the US

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. reports that the CNMI has joined Guam at the top of the list of the highest case rates in the United States.

During a virtual press briefing last week, Stephanie Kern-Allely, regional communicable disease epidemiologist for the Pacific Island Health Officers Association, said the CNMI is now No. 3 in the United States in terms of highest case rates.

Guam is at No. 2 with about 378 cases per 100,000 people. Two days ago, the CNMI had a case rate of 150, which is half that, "so we are now at No. 3," she said. She did not mention which state is at No. 1.

In addition, Kern-Allely said the CNMI is expecting a spike in cases with the omicron variant found in specimens collected back in December.

The CNMI has already started to see an increase in cases over the weekend. In the latest news report, 204 additional individuals were confirmed positive for COVID-19, bringing the CNMI total to 5,891 cases since March 26, 2020.

Of the 204 cases, 153 were identified on Feb. 4, 2022, and 51 were identified on Feb. 3, 2022. Of the newly identified cases, 119 were identified via contact tracing, 84 via community testing, 1 via travel testing. Ten were identified on Tinian, and 6 were identified on Rota.

As of Feb. 5, there were 10 individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19; 5 unvaccinated, 4 vaccinated, 1 partially vaccinated.

Last week, CHCC confirmed that multiple COVID-19 samples sent in to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were identified as the omicron variant.

Of the 64 samples sequenced in the batch sent Jan. 12, 2022, 43 were identified as the omicron variant and 21 as the delta variant. The samples in this batch were collected from Dec. 20, 2021 to Jan. 10, 2022. The first sample that was identified as omicron was collected on Dec. 20, 2021.

According to the CDC, preliminary data suggest that omicron may cause more mild disease, although some people may still have severe disease, need hospitalization, and could die from the infection with this variant. Even if only a small percentage of people with omicron infection need hospitalization, the large volume of cases could overwhelm the health care system.

Persons infected with the omicron variant can show symptoms similar to previous variants. The severity of symptoms can be affected by COVID-19 vaccination status, other health conditions, age, and history of prior infection. Individuals who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines and get COVID-19 are less likely to develop serious illness than those who are unvaccinated and get COVID-19.

CCC

From Page 1

IPI's license."

It was Yeom who originally filed five complaints against IPI in April 2021 for failure to comply with certain requirements under its license agreement.

Those five complaints specifically related to IPI's failure to pay its annual US$15.5 million license fee in August 2020, failure to pay its annual $3.1 million regulatory fee in October 2020, failure to contribute $20 million to the community benefit fund in both 2018 and 2019, failure to comply with its minimum $2 billion capital requirement and failure to comply with a CCC order to pay all money owing to its vendors.

IPI's license was suspended in May and the company given six months to pay both the US$15.5 million casino license fee and US$3.1 million regulatory fee, as well as a US$6.6 million fine.

Having failed to do so, Yeom is now ready to pull IPI's license permanently although IPI CEO Ray Yumul has threatened to open up on past dealings with local officials should such a scenario eventuate. *(Editor's Note: Yumul has since resigned from the company.)* ***(Inside Asian Gaming)***

Reprinted with permission from Inside Asian Gaming. See original article here: https://www.asgam.com/index.php/2022/02/02/saipan-regulator-to-rule-on-revocation-of-ipi-casino-license-in-march/

577

From Page 1

Feb. 4, 2022, and 51 on Feb. 3, 2022. A total of 119 were identified via contact tracing, 84 via community testing, and one via travel testing. Of this new total, 10 were identified on Tinian and six on Rota .

As of Feb. 5, 2022, there were 10 individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19. Five are unvaccinated, four are vaccinated, and one is partially vaccinated. One has already been discharged.

On testing and vaccination, CHCC said a total of 397 COVID-19 vaccines were administered on Feb. 5, 2022, resulting in 99.7% of the CNMI's eligible population being fully vaccinated.

A total of 1,305 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Feb. 4, 2022: 831 via community-based testing; 311 at the COVID-19 Community Center (referrals only); 138 at Tinian Health Center; and 25 at the Rota Health Center

Of the 5,891 total cases identified in the CNMI, as of Feb. 4, 2022, there have been 4,418 recoveries; 1,450 active cases; and 23 COVID-19-related deaths .

The CHCC continues to encourage the community to get vaccinated if they have not done so, or get their booster shot if they are eligible to help prevent severe illness, hospitalization, or death.

Please seek care or get tested if you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, as you may be eligible for treatment that is given soon after infection.

Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should stay home and isolate when they are sick (except to get medical care), even if they do not have symptoms; rest; stay hydrated; can take over-the-counter medicines, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen, to relieve symptoms; and live COVID-19 safe.

Individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and live COVID-19 safe (except to get medical care or get tested for COVID-19). Other options include seeing their health care provider or calling the CHCC Tele-Triage hotline at (670) 233-2067. Learn more on how to live COVID-19 safe at www.staysafecnmi.com/live-covidsafe. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

US asks UN to meet on N. Korea missile that can reach Guam

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The United States called for the U.N. Security Council to meet on North Korea's most recent test of an intermediate-range ballistic missile capable of reaching Guam, its most significant launch in years that could target American territory.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned Sunday's launch, saying it broke the North's announced moratorium on such launches and clearly violated Security Council resolutions, U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said.

The U.N. chief urged North Korea "to desist from taking any further counter-productive actions," expressing "great concern" that Pyongyang again "disregarded any consideration for international flight or maritime safety," Haq said Tuesday. Guterres also called for all parties to seek a peaceful diplomatic solution.

The State Department confirmed late Tuesday that the U.S. Mission to the U.N. requested closed council consultations be held Thursday.

After Sunday's launch, White House officials said they saw the latest missile test as part of an escalating series of provocations over the last several months by North Korea that have become increasingly concerning and are aimed at winning relief from sanctions.

DeLeon Guerrero questions Castro appointment as chief of staff

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) has questioned the appointment of former Guam senator William M. Castro as Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' chief of staff, asking why Torres has not appointed somebody from the CNMI to fill the position.

During the Senate session last Thursday, DeLeon Guerrero said she is not convinced that there is no one in the Commonwealth who could fill this position that is currently being occupied by Castro.

"We have individuals in our community that possess a master's degree in HR [human resources] matters, in managing the workforce. And just because maybe they're not Harvard graduates, that may seem to be why this person, Mr. William M. Castro, would be the ideal person to hold the position," she said.

DeLeon Guerrero

Castro

DeLeon Guerrero made the comments about Castro's appointment in response to Torres' message dated Jan. 19, 2022, where he certified an annual salary for Castro in excess of $65,175 per annum. In the letter, Torres wants to pay Castro $80,000 per annum as chief of staff-Office of the Governor.

Castro is a former senator in the 34th and 35th Guam Legislature. He received his bachelor's degree in secondary education from the University of Guam, a master's degree from Harvard University, and attained doctoral candidate status at Columbia University. Castro had also served as director of Institutional Effectiveness at the Northern Marianas College.

DeLeon Guerrero said that Torres' letter cites CMC, subsection 8250C for his certification request. She said she remembers in prior Senate sessions last year, when they first entered into office, that she made a comment in one of their sessions and she cited that particular statute, which says, "If the governor certifies to the presiding officers of the Legislature, and the chairman of the Civil Service Commission that, after a diligent effort, the Commonwealth is unable to recruit a professionally or technically qualified person to take an appointed position, he or she may waive the salary ceiling established by law for that position."

"I think we need to take a careful look internally and really go by the statute that is telling us that there has to be some kind of due diligence effort made to source internal market of the Commonwealth of our very own people that possess that credentials and the qualifications to fill these positions," DeLeon Guerrero said.

MANPOWER

From Page 1

U.S. Attorney's Office news release last Friday. The court also ordered three years of supervised release, a $7,000 fine, and a $100 special assessment fee.

Nario is the owner, president, and manager of A&A Enterprises, CNMI LLC, a manpower agency business in the CNMI. Since its incorporation in January 2019, A&A Enterprises facilitated an unlawful scheme to acquire CW-1 nonimmigrant visas for foreign citizens to enter and remain in the CNMI.

Nario and his staff submitted petitions to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services for at least 99 known foreign citizens. The petitions included contracts of employment, specifying terms, hours, and wages to be paid. A&A Enterprises did not intend to employ these foreign citizens. The scheme was merely a mechanism to get them temporary immigration status. After paying $1,500 to $2,000 to A&A Enterprises for their CW-1 visas, once in the CNMI, these foreign workers would gain nondocumented jobs such as in construction, groundskeeping, and housekeeping, and then pay A&A Enterprises a fee of $194.00 every two weeks to keep their status.

The CW-1 visa program requires businesses petitioning for foreign workers to prove there is a demand for certain jobs and that those jobs for some reason cannot be filled by available United States citizens. The petitioning business must also pay the administrative fees and travel expenses for the foreign workers. But in this case, foreign workers were required to pay for these expenses and acquire their own jobs, while A&A Enterprises profited.

At the same hearing, a second defendant, Rosalee Bangot Abejo, 47, a Filipino citizen residing in the CNMI, was sentenced to six months of home confinement and 36 months of probation for conspiracy to defraud the united States. The court also ordered 72 months of supervised release, 50 hours of community service, and a $100 special assessment fee.

During its investigation of A&A Enterprises, Homeland Security Investigations discovered Abejo was assisting the company by providing documents and other templates included with fraudulent visa petitions by A&A Enterprises. Abejo also relied upon staff at A&A Enterprises to electronically modify documents, which Abejo used to fraudulently submit CW-1 and CW-2 petitions for two friends, and her own husband.

"The CW-1 program continues to be abused by certain employers in the CNMI," said Shawn N. Anderson, U.S. Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. "The public and the workers deserve a visa system that is free from fraud and waste. We will prosecute this unlawful conduct to hold employers accountable and to promote fairness among those seeking employment in the CNMI."

"These business owners defrauded many people who believed they were coming to the CNMI for legitimate jobs," said John F. Tobon, special agent in charge of Homeland Security Investigations Honolulu. "HSI will continue to investigate these crimes vigorously to protect the integrity of our immigration system and those who are victimized by these con-artists."

The case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations and prosecuted by Albert S. Flores Jr., assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of the Northern Mariana Islands ***(PR)***

Committees given 2 weeks to come up with impeachment rules

Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) has requested the co-chairs of the two committees that he assigned to review the impeachment resolution to come up with impeachment rules within 14 days.

During the Senate's session last Thursday, Hofschneider announced that he would also be assigning another member to the committees with respect to the impeachment process that they are going to undertake in the Senate. He did not mention who the senator is.

The president earlier referred the impeachment resolution to the Committee on Judiciary, Government, Law, and Federal Resolutions, and Committee on Executive, Appointments, and Government Investigations. Sens. Karl King Nabors and Francisco Q. Cruz, both Tinian Republicans, chair the JGLFR and EAGI committees, respectively.

"Now that the resolution is under your watch, I ask that you come up with the rules pertaining to the impeachment hearings within 14 calendar days," Hofschneider said.

House Resolution 22-14 impeached Torres for alleged commission of felonies, corruption, and neglect of duty.

Sen. Paul A. Manglona (Ind-Rota) recently asked Hofschneider to include the Senate minority in reviewing and talks on the impeachment resolution. As it is right now, Manglona said, the two Senate committees that were appointed to review the impeachment resolution have 100% Republican membership without any minority representation. Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres is a Republican.

Manglona also noted that Hofschneider's memorandum that assigned the impeachment resolution to the two committees does not express the necessity for a swift turnaround with a firm deadline.

Manglona and Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) recently pre-filed a resolution to use the Impeachment Rules of Procedure that the 18th Senate had adopted in 2013 for the impeached then-governor Benigno R. Fitial. ***(Ferdie De La Torre)***

CNMI resident serves overseas without going off-island

Posegate

WASHINGTON—Saipan resident Robert "Winston" Posegate is among approximately 230 individuals who participated in the Peace Corps' Virtual Service Pilot. Launched in October 2020, VSP is a virtual service opportunity where former Peace Corps volunteers donate their services through virtual engagements with community-based partners overseas.

Posegate completed two virtual engagements—one from February to April 2021 and another from July to November 2021—teaching English as a foreign language in Armenia.

"My service in Armenia had been cut short due to the pandemic, and the VSP was a way to reconnect with the Peace Corps and to work with Armenian students and counterparts. I was waiting to return to service, but I thought I might not be able to return to Armenia as a volunteer again. I also wanted to get familiar with teaching groups on Zoom," said Posegate.

Returned volunteers from all decades since the '60s, including those evacuated in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, may express their interest in donating their voluntary services to the Virtual Service Pilot. Participants are matched with host communities according to their skills and the needs of the community. Engaging host country counterparts and stakeholders on virtual platforms, participants have worked in the fields of education, health, financial literacy, agribusiness and environmental protection. In true Peace Corps spirit, Virtual Service Pilot participants demonstrated flexibility and creativity in connecting with their host country counterparts, navigating different time zones and diverse online platforms to complete their tasks. VSP participants donated five to 15 hours weekly to their host communities and collaborated on projects over a 12- to 24-week timeline.

"Both of my VSP experiences were very meaningful to me. In the spring, we covered cultural topics such as taboos and stereotypes, which I had long wanted to address with English as a second language students. In the fall, we were able to come up with our own topics and create lesson plans for them, and I covered topics such as the Olympics, smoking, transportation safety, and U.S. geography. I strove for interesting and important discussions," said Posegate.

Posegate is a graduate of Hawaii Pacific University. Before participating in VSP, he served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Armenia in the education sector from March 2019 to March 2020.

VSP offers a unique opportunity for returned Peace Corps volunteers to further the agency's mission in a role distinct from the traditional on-the-ground Volunteer experience. The pilot also offers those with family, work and school commitments, the opportunity to serve a community abroad while remaining in the U.S. To learn more, visit the VSP webpage. ***(PR)***

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Closing Date: February 8, 2022

POSITION TITLE:	**Meter Reader**
DEPARTMENT:	**COA/Billing & Collections**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$16,742.00 - $22,602.00 per annum, (plus Hazardous pay) Non-Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**Four (4)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief of Administration or his/her designee.

Duties:

- Required to work in the field obtaining utility meter readings for electric and water consumption meters, deep well or outflow meters and other similar devices and entering data in hand-held computers or devices.
- Perform work orders for customer service verifications and investigations. Reports findings and recommends solutions and updates customer accounts.
- Performs research on account discrepancies or unusual meter readings and consumption. Reports irregularities or reasons for fluctuations.
- Prepares reports of findings, deficiencies and recommendations to assist in investigations and billing resolutions as needed.
- Inspects, repairs, replaces or disconnects utility meters and equipment and services.
- Assigns routing numbers for customer locations.
- Monitors meters for damaged or unauthorized connections and tampering.
- Assist in reviewing cycles, work orders, and readings in preparation of bill processing.
- Assist in the processing and printing of customer bills and delivery of bills and notices.
- Assist other divisions with mapping projects, locations, and other requirements.
- Assist other divisions with mapping projects, locations, and other requirements.
- Operates and maintains use of government vehicles; conducts basic vehicle inspections to ensure they are in proper working order and recommends service and maintenance of vehicles.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS Diploma.

Knowledge of: Customer service principles; Basic mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Safety principles and safe work practices; Applicable equipment used in field utility services (based on assignment); Modern office technology.

Skills in: Coordinating services with other departments or resources; Inspecting and operating field equipment related to utility usage (based on assignment); Performing basic mathematical calculations; Researching account information or discrepancies; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, reports and records; Copying and scanning documents; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

- **Licensing:**
  o Valid CNMI Driver's License with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

P. O. Box 501220, Third Floor, Joeten Dandan Building, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Fax: (670) 235-5131
CUC is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
RE-ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 22 – 022

Opening Date: January 26, 2022
Closing Date: February 8, 2022

POSITION TITLE:	**Dispatch Operator**
DEPARTMENT:	**COA/Customer Service/Call Center**
LOCATION:	**Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA**
ANNUAL SALARY:	**$16,742.00 per annum, Non-Exempt**
CONTRACT:	**Not Contracted**
POSITION(S):	**Five (5)**

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief of Administration or his/her designee.

Duties:

- Monitors radio communications in order to dispatch crews for troubleshooting and for related service calls.
- Receives incoming calls reporting complaints or issues related to water, sewer or power utilities; provides general customer service; and routes service calls to appropriate resource.
- Organizes and maintains file systems and pertinent records.
- Performs data entry; maintains and updates logs and dispatch related documentation.
- Prepares and maintains requisitions.
- Follows up with customers to provide basic information, status updates, and to verify customer's experience and any remaining service needs.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:
Education: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS and up to 1 year of customer service experience.

Knowledge of: Customer service principles; Basic recordkeeping principles; Radio communications equipment procedures; Modern office technology.

Skills in: Providing customer service; Monitoring and utilizing radio communications and equipment; receiving and routing service or problem calls; entering, updating and maintaining data; organizing and maintaining filing systems and records; preparing and updating logs, records and related documentation; performing follow up calls to ensure adequate service provision; utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

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SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Happy National School Counseling Week to Hopwood Middle School counselors Marjorie Kintol, Livia Pangelinan, Jill Pladevega, and Ashley Roberto! Thank you for all you do for our students, their families, and the community. National School Counseling Week this year is taking place on Feb. 7-11, 2022. It is intended to focus public attention on the unique contribution of school counselors within U.S. school systems.

Seven former IPI workers reach agreement with casino investor

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The seven workers who alleged labor abuses and human trafficking have reached an agreement with its former employer, Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC, to stay the enforcement of their judgment pending the outcome of IPI's appeal.

The plaintiffs in this case—Tianming Wang, Dong Han, Yongjun Meng, Liangcai Sun, Youli Wang, Qingchun Xu, and Duxin Yan—through their lawyers, Aaron Halegua and Bruce Berline, have reached an agreement on all substantive terms of an "agreement to stay enforcement," under which IPI will provide sufficient security and the plaintiffs will agree to stay enforcement of their judgment pending the outcome of IPI's appeal.

Following a hearing at the U.S. District Court for the NMI last Thursday, the parties informed the court that they anticipate to execute the agreement in the course of the next 48 hours.

IPI and the Wang plaintiffs agree that, should they execute their "agreement to stay enforcement" as anticipated, they will submit a negotiated agreement to the court with proposed terms for continuing the receivership, but that would render the currently scheduled briefing unnecessary.

The Wang plaintiffs are one of the "other creditors" who have filed a motion to step into the shoes of USA Fanter Corp., in regards to the limited receivership.

Ping Shun Corp., also one of the "other creditors" has already reached an agreement with IPI to stay enforcement on their judgment pending IPI's appeal.

Ping Shun officially filed its stipulation with the court stating that it has executed an agreement with IPI to stay enforcement of its judgment in exchange for IPI securing a "supersedeas bond" in the amount of $445,000 on or before Feb. 22.

As of Jan. 20, Ping Shun, through its counsel, Samuel Mok, said that IPI has secured an initial "supersedeas bond" in the amount of $250,000 through surety American Contractors Indemnity Company.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Case No. 1:20-CV-00034 Court ordered public sale of the leasehold interest for Lot 019 D 61 and Lot 019 D 83 located on Navy Hill, Saipan.

Sale will be held at the property site **February 15, 2022 at 11:00a.m.** The property has an incomplete 5 story apartment building improvement with 31 apartments overlooking the ocean. Bidders must register by contacting saipanhomes@gmail.com. Registered bidders will be notified of a viewing date and time and make available a copy of existing lease.

Terms of the sale can be seen at www.saipanservices.com or call the limited receiver at 670-287-4766 for additional information.

Kilili to DC: NMI needs skilled CW workers to build infra projects

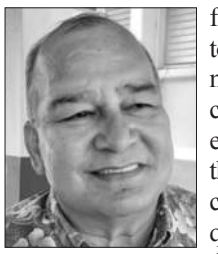
By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) has called the attention of the Biden administration about the need for enough skilled labor or CNMI-Only Transitional Workers (CW-1) to build many federally funded infrastructure projects in the CNMI.

In his e-kilili newsletter over the weekend, Sablan said a focus of this year's meeting between the Biden administration and insular area governors and members of U.S. Congress was the infrastructure development that Congress has funded in the American Rescue Plan Act, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and other pandemic-related legislation.

At the annual Interagency Group on Insular Areas meeting in Washington D.C. last Tuesday, Sablan brought attention to the CNMI's need for sufficient labor to put the hundreds of millions of federal dollars to work building water and sewer systems, upgrading schools and medical facilities, hardening power production and delivery, and improving transportation.

Sablan said the U.S. Congress will certainly need to extend beyond fiscal year 2022 the 3,000 CW-1 visas he provided for construction workers in Public Law 116-94.


Sablan

"I ask the administration [to] support that effort," he said.

At the same meeting, citing a shortage in manpower to perform large-scale projects, among other things, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres underscored the need to have the permanent allotment of 3,000 CW-1 permits to support construction activities in the CNMI.

In his remarks that Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig delivered on behalf of Torres, the governor pushed for permanent allocation of 3,000 CW-1 permits to the CNMI during the transition period of the CW Visa Program. Torres wants the 3,000 CW-1 permits to be separate from any presidentially-declared disasters in the CNMI. Torres was unable to personally deliver his remarks after recently tested positive for COVID-19.

In his e-kilili newsletter last weekend, Sablan said he also called at the meeting for greater federal involvement to keep an eye on the money and ensure local leaders spend it effectively to address the threat of climate change and raise the quality of life for residents of the islands.

The delegate reported substantial progress on loss of Medicaid funding, which was the one issue that all insular areas raised at the last Interagency Group on Insular Areas meeting in 2020. He noted that Congress solved the funding problem with a large and permanent increase—$64 million for the Marianas this year in Public Law 116-94.

Sablan said he asked White House director of Intergovernmental Affairs Julie Rodriguez and other Biden officials to continue to support the 17% Medicaid local match rate that Congress also included in Public Law 116-94, which must be renewed this year.

He also asked the Biden administration to prioritize renegotiations of the Compacts of Free Association with the Pacific neighbors, the Marshall Islands, and Micronesia.

BUSINESS PERSON OF THE YEAR JOSHUA SANTOS
Brian Shin, third from right, chief executive officer of the Global Hotel Division of E-Land Group, shares a picture with colleagues after being named Saipan Chamber of Commerce's 2021 Business Person of the Year during SCC's "Business Person of the Year Annual Gala" last Jan. 29 at Kensington Hotel Saipan's Kensington Hall.

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NMHC JVA NO.	Positions:	Salary:	Opening Date	Closing Date
2022-005	Executive Assistant to the Board of Directors	$30,000.00-$40,000.00 per annum- UNGRADED	Jan. 27, 2022	Feb. 16, 2022 4:00 PM

Employment application form, detailed job description, qualification requirements and other information may be accessed at www.nmhcgov.net.

Applicants may submit their applications through the following options: Submission at the at the NMHC Central Office in Garapan, Saipan; or at the Drop Box located in front of the NMHC Central Office building; or email application and documents to officemanager@nmhcgov.net.

All applicants must complete and submit the NMHC Employment Application Form together with required documents that are listed in the Employment Application Package. Failure to provide the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. NMHC and all its properties are drug-free zones; therefore, selected applicant will be subject to pre-employment drug screening.

It is the policy of the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) that the merit system will be applied and administered according to the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens and nationals as defined by its personnel regulations and the Northern Marianas Commonwealth Constitution regardless of age, race, sex, religion, political affiliation or belief, marital status, disability or place of origin.

For inquiries, please contact Mr. Jacob Muna, Office Manager, at (670) 234-6866/9447or by email to officemanager@nmhcgov.net. NMHC is a fair housing agency and an equal opportunity provider, lender and employer.

/s/
JESSE S. PALACIOS
Corporate Director

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
MVA-RFP-22-2047
Marianas Visitors Authority Tourism Resumption Investment Plan (TRIP)-Airlines

Submission /Closing Date: **February 18, 2022** **Time: 10:00AM ChST**

Submit sealed proposals to: Marianas Visitors Authority
Attn: Procurement Office
San Jose Professional Building
Beach Rd., San Jose
P.O. Box 500861, Saipan, MP 96950

Interested parties may pick up the RFP package on or after February 04, 2022 at the Marianas Visitors Authority Office, San Jose Professional Building, Beach Road, San Jose, Saipan, during the hours of 8:00AM-12:00PM and 1:00PM-5:00PM., Monday through Friday, except holidays. The RFP package can be emailed to anyone interested. The request via email must reference **"MVA-RFP-22-2047 MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY TRIP-AIRLINES"** in the subject line to lmaratita@mymarianas.com

/s/ Ellsbeth Viola Alepuyo
Chairperson, MVA Board of Directors

/s/ Priscilla M. Iakopo
Managing Director, MVA

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
MVA IS HIRING!!!

JVA #	VACANT POSITION	OPENING DATE 2/1/2022	CLOSING DATE 2/15/2022
JVA#22-008:	SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE MANAGING DIRECTOR (SAIPAN)		
JVA#22-007:	PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (SAIPAN)		
JVA#22-006:	MARKETING SPECIALIST I (SAIPAN)		
JVA#22-005:	ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES MANAGER (SAIPAN)		
LOCATION:	MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY		

INTERESTED PERSONS MAY CONTACT THE MARIANAS VISITORS AUTHORITY OFFICE AT (670) 664-3200/01 OR VISIT WWW.MYMARIANAS.COM FOR MORE DETAILS.

CNMI DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB22-DOL/WIA-42200076

SUBMISSION DATE: February 24, 2022 TIME: 10:30 A.M.

"SYMMETRICAL BANDWIDTH INTERNET SERVICE CONNECTION OF 100 Mbp DOWN AND 100 Mbps UP FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AGENCY"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT THE HORIGUCHI BLDG. GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

****FOR YOUR SAFETY & OURS: ALL INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS ARE REQUIRED TO USE A FACE MASK & ARE REQUIRED TO REGISTER UPON ENTRY****

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO MS. FRANCES A. TORRES, AT THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AGENCY, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AT (670) 664-1758.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ VICKY BENAVENTE
SECRETARY OF LABOR

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM • WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

NOTICE OF TOWN HALL MEETINGS

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) gives notice that a Town Hall Meeting is being held to address matters surrounding the 2020 Audit Report, the Passenger Facility Charges Audit, and the litigation history between Star Marianas Air and CPA.

The Town Hall Meeting will be held on the following dates:

Rota: Tuesday, February 08, 2022, 6:00 p.m. in the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport's Departure Area.

Tinian: Tuesday, February 22, 2022, 6:00 p.m. at the Tinian International Airport's Departure Terminal.

Persons wishing to make comments may do so in person or may email them to cpa.receptionist@pticom.com by no later than 4:00pm on **February 23, 2022**.

_____/s/_____
CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

P.O. Box 10007 | Saipan, MP 96950 | Phone: (670) 664-1712 | Email: cnmiswdb@dol.gov.mp
VISION: "To integrate a seamless workforce development system that meets the needs of employers, job-seekers, workers, and youths in order to supply quality employees for the dynamic economy of the CNMI."

Regular General Membership Meeting
Thursday, February 10, 2021
Venue: Aqua Resort Club - Taga Room & Virtual*
Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

** Due to Covid-19 safety measures, in-person attendance is limited to members of the State Workforce Development Board. Virtual attendance is available to members of the public interested in attending or making public comments. Please email cnmiswdb@dol.gov.mp for the link prior to the meeting.*

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review & Adoption of Agenda
IV. Election of Officers
V. Adoption of Minutes – October 21, 2021 General Membership Meeting
VI. Public Comments
VII. Program Updates
VIII. New Business
  a. Unified State Plan Modifications - Program Year 2022-2023**
IX. Executive Session
X. Announcements
XI. Next Meeting: To be announced
XII. Adjournment

***Denotes Action Item*

/s/ Velma Palacios
Chairperson

This announcement is paid in full through a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration.

MISSION: ""Empowering, integrating, implementing, and innovating the workforce needs of the CNMI."

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXII, Issue No. 26

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MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Obamacare has delivered, over GOP resistance. Voters should remember that

The Affordable Care Act, which not that long ago appeared doomed by Republican determination to kill it, has quietly become an integral and accepted part of America's health care system. A record 14.5 million Americans this year have signed up to get their health insurance through the act's insurance marketplaces, thanks in large part to the Biden administration's efforts to reverse the sabotage of the Trump years and make the program work.

The ACA, better known as Obamacare, is still far from perfect. But with the partisan wrangling and court battles finally subsiding, the long-term judgment of history for this once-controversial program is coming into focus. As Americans this year decide whether to hand Congress back to the party that spent a decade frantically trying to prevent Obamacare's benefits from being realized, it's worth stepping back and reviewing this epic achievement.

When then-President Barack Obama and a Democratic Congress approved the act in 2010, over fervent Republican resistance, America's health care system was a national tragedy and a global embarrassment. Tens of millions of Americans couldn't obtain health insurance because their jobs didn't provide policies, or they had preexisting medical conditions for which insurance companies could refuse them coverage. For huge swaths of society, preventive care was out of reach, and lifelong medical debt was just one heart attack or car accident away.

Even under those dire conditions, America was not (and likely is not yet) ready to rethink the notion that health care should be treated as a for-profit industry instead of a fundamental human right. So the ACA, using ideas that originated with conservative think tanks, was structured to work with the private insurance industry, rather than to replace it. Controls were put on insurance premiums, particularly focused on ensuring that people with preexisting conditions wouldn't be priced out; Americans who still couldn't afford the premiums were eligible for government subsidies.

Republican cries of "death panels" and "rationed care" were always nonsense, as the clarity of hindsight now proves. Yet the GOP's yearslong efforts to kill Obamacare were relentless. Red states like Missouri refused to expand Medicare, a key component of the program, even though the federal government would cover the cost. Reams of legislation and litigation attempting to kill it were filed perennially. The Trump administration, unable to formally end the program, yanked its advertising funding to make it less accessible to Americans. In real ways, the Republican Party did everything in its power to pull away the newly acquired health care coverage that millions of Americans finally had.

The recent silence from Republican politicians on this issue that previously obsessed over them indicates that even they understand the battle is over. The ACA has become an important resource in keeping Americans healthy, and the sky hasn't fallen. Losing it now would be catastrophic. Voters should remember that as they go to the polls this fall.

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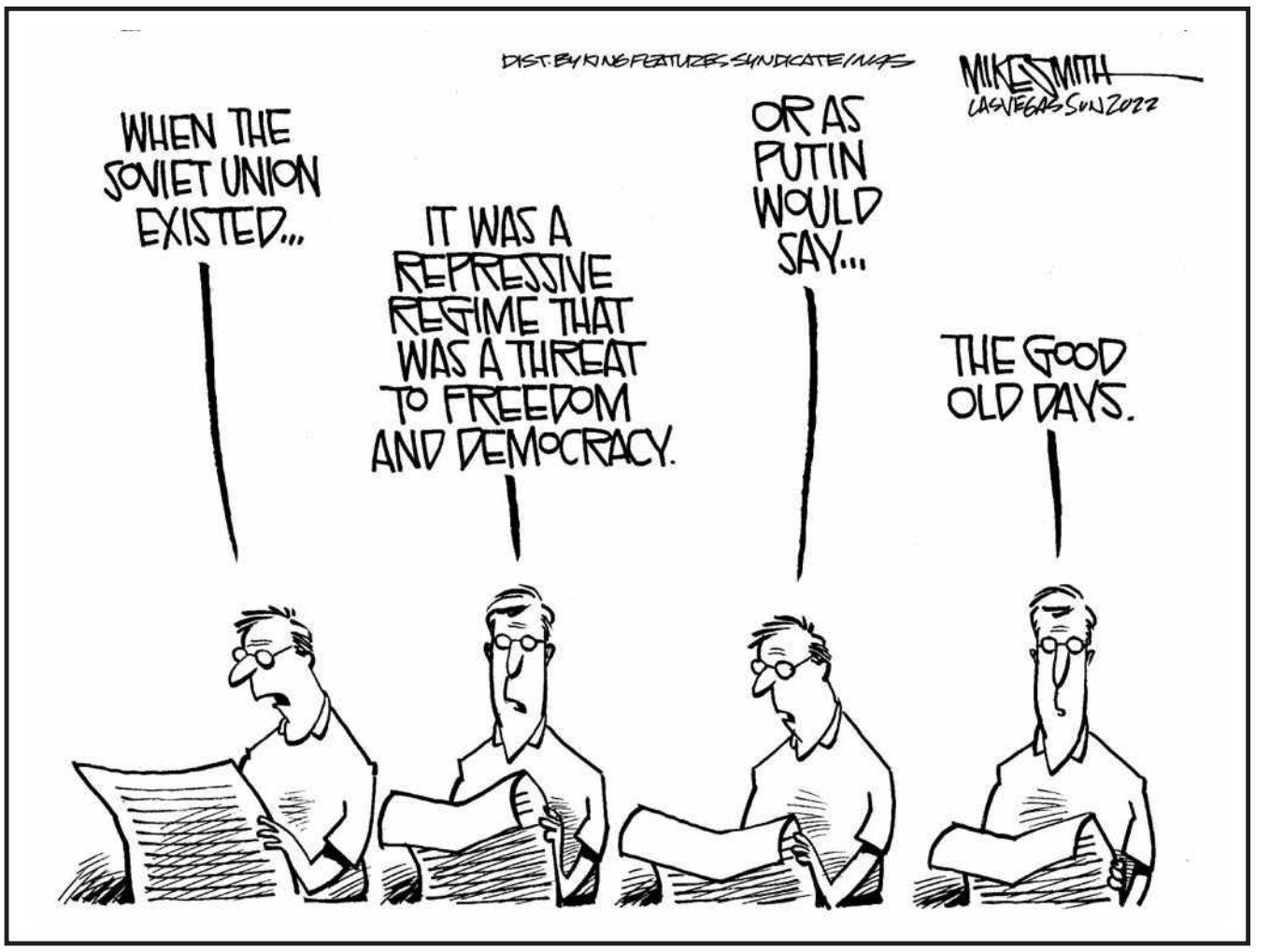

DIST. BY KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/NUAS
MIKE SMITH
LAS VEGAS SUN 2022
WHEN THE SOVIET UNION EXISTED...
IT WAS A REPRESSIVE REGIME THAT WAS A THREAT TO FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY.
OR AS PUTIN WOULD SAY...
THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

Enough. Here's our plan to solve gun violence

By JOE BIDEN
New York Daily News

Joe Biden is president of the United States. This piece first appeared in the New York Daily News.

In the past week, New York City has paid tribute to two of its finest, Detectives Wilbert Mora and Jason Rivera. They represented who and what we want law enforcement to be: brave, idealistic and deeply committed to service. Their bright futures were cut short by a man with a stolen gun and a 40-round drum magazine.

Six NYPD officers have been victims of gun violence so far this year. Nationally, 64 children have been injured by gun violence already this year; 26 children killed. Every day in this country, 316 people are shot; 106 killed.

It's time for all of us to say: enough. There are steps we can take to turn pain into purpose, and that is what I was in New York Thursday to announce.

Mayor Eric Adams and I agree: The solution is not to defund our police, it's to give them the tools, training and funding to be the partners and protectors our communities need. The answer is not to abandon our streets. It's for police and the community to come together to make them safer through policing that treats everyone with dignity and respect.

That's why I've called on Congress to pass a budget later this month that provides cities an additional $300 million for community policing. We need more police on the street, walking the beat and making communities safer.

I've also asked Congress to provide $200 million for community violence intervention programs like the one I visited in Queens, where trusted community members work directly with the people most likely to commit or become victims of gun crimes. These programs can reduce violence by up to 60%.

That's a half-billion dollars for proven strategies we know will reduce violent crime. That, along with the increased funding I've requested for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the U.S. Marshals, is essential to my comprehensive, nationwide strategy to prevent gun crime.

First, we're cracking down on the flow of firearms used to commit violence. That means going after rogue gun dealers who illegally sell to criminals. We're also sending additional prosecutorial resources to shut down the so-called "iron pipeline" that brings guns from other states into New York City. Gov. Kathy Hochul has created an interstate, interagency task force to stem the flow of illegal guns. Efforts like this will make a big difference.

We're also going after people who use "ghost guns" to commit crimes. These are the guns that can be assembled from a kit but can't be traced when they're used in a crime because they don't have serial numbers. So we're launching an intensified national ghost guns enforcement initiative to deter criminals from using those weapons to cover their tracks. If someone commits a crime with a ghost gun, not only will state and local prosecutors come after them, they should expect federal charges and prosecution.

Second, we're funding smart law enforcement and gun crime prevention efforts. New York City has identified a few hundred individuals in a city of 8.8 million who are repeatedly involved in gun violence. Every weekday, the city brings together federal, state and local law enforcement sharing intelligence so that we can get these shooters off the street. I visited a meeting of this "Gun Violence Strategic Partnership" during my trip and saw how effective it is when everyone is working together against gun violence. The U.S. Department of Justice is going to help more cities adopt the same model.

Third, we're investing in community violence intervention and prevention strategies that work, like violence interrupters, summer and after-school programs for teens, jobs for young adults (as the saying goes, "an idle mind is the devil's workshop"), school counselors and nurses, and mental health and substance abuse treatment.

Fourth, when someone finishes their time in prison, we can't just hand them $25 and a bus ticket. We need to ensure they can access job training, stable housing and a second chance at a better life.

I will keep doing everything in my power to make our communities safer, but Congress also needs to do its part. Pass universal background checks. Ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Close loopholes to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, and repeal the liability shield for gun manufacturers, because there's no reason that they should be the only industry in America that's exempt from being sued. These are all commonsense steps that will save lives.

We can never bring back those we've lost. But we can come together to fulfill the first responsibility of our government and our democracy: to keep each other safe. I am committed to working with the people and leaders of New York to do just that.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Quality time with parents—a pandemic trend that should stay

By JEFFERY M. LEVING
Chicago Tribune

Jeffery M. Leving is founder and president of the Law Offices of Jeffery M. Leving and is an advocate for the rights of fathers. He is the author of Fathers' Rights, Divorce Wars, and How to Be a Good Divorced Dad.

The pandemic has been hard on us, but one of the positives to come out of it has been the increased amount of quality time parents have spent with their children. This is especially true for fathers, who typically spend less time with their kids than mothers, and is something that all parents should strive to maintain, even once the pandemic is a memory.

A survey the U.S. Census Bureau released in January found that parents spent more time eating, reading and playing with their children from March 2020 to June 2020, when lockdowns were at their most intense. This interaction time was up significantly from previous years.

The "Survey of Income and Program Participation" was based on interviews with one parent from each of 22,000 households during the first four months of the pandemic. Of course, the survey is not a measure of absolute fact—the bureau noted it may have an inherent flaw, the fact that those who responded were different from those who did not. Specifically, the survey authors said those who responded were more likely to be older, foreign-born, married, more educated and above the poverty level than in the two prior years. However, it is the best indicator right now of the impact of the pandemic on parental involvement.

According to the survey, the proportion of meals parents shared with their children increased from 56% to 63% for some, and 69% of parents reported reading to young children five or more times per week in 2020, up from 65% in 2018 and 64% in 2019.

Undoubtedly this is a good thing to emerge from the pandemic. The fact that many children were forced to learn remotely and many parents worked from home facilitated this change. Now that most children have returned to in-person classes, it will be interesting to see how this affects the amount of quality time parents spend with their children. It will also be interesting to see, perhaps several years from now, all the ways the pandemic has affected families and children.

The survey also found that parents' outings with children decreased, probably because of the lockdown closings of restaurants, museums and other venues and pandemic-related travel restrictions. That said, many parents learned during the pandemic that quality time isn't limited to going to a baseball game or museum. It can be found at home, free of charge.

The pandemic has caused many to re-prioritize what is important in their lives. And many companies have taken note—increasingly offering work-from-home options that weren't available before the pandemic.

Of course, for many workers, especially those in critical service jobs such as first responders, working remotely has never been and never will be an option. And as often is the case, those at the lower financial rungs of society were strained the most during the pandemic. Many were unable to work remotely and many couldn't find employment. Obviously, these workers did not have extra time to read to their children. The question of how to make quality time more equitable is one that we will have to address, but at least a light is now being shined on it.

As for the others, some companies can give employees the option of working from home when feasible, which is vital for parents looking to increase time with their children. Lawmakers should also address this where appropriate in order to make sure both fathers and mothers are afforded the same opportunities.

And parents should continue to do all they can to ensure that spending quality time with their children continues long after the pandemic is over.

Give nuclear exposure victims a break

By R. HUGH STEPHENS
Progressive Perspectives

R. Hugh Stephens is the principal lawyer at Stephens & Stephens, a Buffalo, N.Y. based firm.

Every month or so, my law office will get a call from the spouse of a nuclear weapons or uranium worker who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer. We help file a claim for the worker with the Department of Justice or the Department of Labor, both of which run a compensation program.

Typically, these claims can be handled in a matter of weeks. Modest compensation allocated through these programs provide help with medical bills and certain other financial obligations.

Most people don't realize that these programs exist, or even that our nuclear weapons system affects so many people across the country.

Originally known as the Manhattan Project, the U.S. nuclear weapons program in 1945 produced its first nuclear blast, the Trinity Test, in Alamogordo, New Mexico. But the impact of this testing has not been limited by either time or geography. Every day, downwinders, on-site participants, uranium miners, millers and ore transporters are diagnosed with cancers, pulmonary fibrosis and other serious illnesses from exposures that happened decades ago. Even today, nuclear weapons workers are being made ill at facilities across the country.

Those who become sick as a result of work in the nuclear weapons manufacturing and testing industry are eligible for health care benefits and compensation from those two federal programs: the Radiation Exposure Compensation Program (RECP) and the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program (EEOICP).

The programs, not unlike the Veterans Affairs program that provides benefits for U.S. soldiers, provide vital benefits to workers who have borne the brunt of the physical and financial toll imposed by the nation's nuclear weapons program.

Currently pending bills would extend the RECP and allow on-site participants and downwinders to receive medical care for their accepted conditions under the EEOICP. This would make their claims more similar to the other beneficiaries, including uranium miners, millers and ore transporters, thereby eliminating a flaw in the RECP that prevents on-site participants throughout the country and downwinders in the southwest from receiving the same medical benefits as uranium miners, millers, and ore transporters receive.

Without action from Congress and the president, RECA will expire in July of this year. One path forward is a set of bipartisan bills introduced by Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez (H.R. 5338) and Sen. Mike Crapo (S.2798). These bills extend and make important improvements to these compensation programs.

My experience working with nuclear weapons and uranium workers has shown me that these programs continue to provide essential benefits to workers and their survivors, whose lives have been disrupted by participation in the nuclear weapons program. Both of these programs should be extended and improved.

We owe that, at least, to those who have sacrificed their health in the service of the nation's nuclear ambitions.

There are no heroes in the Neil Young-Spotify saga

By TYLER COWEN
Bloomberg News

Tyler Cowen is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. He is a professor of economics at George Mason University and writes for the blog Marginal Revolution. His books include Big Business: A Love Letter to an American Anti-Hero.

The debates over cancel culture are reaching new heights of absurdity. Consider the decisions of musical icons Neil Young and Joni Mitchell to remove their songs from Spotify. Critics have contended that Joe Rogan's podcast, hosted by Spotify, promotes vaccine-skeptical guests and boosts the spread of misinformation about COVID-19.

Neil Young let it be known that Spotify had to choose between him and Rogan. Not surprisingly, Spotify, which invested $100 million in a relationship with Rogan in 2020, was willing to let Young go. Rogan's podcast, after all, is the most popular podcast of all time.

Some see the musician as an intellectual hero for taking a stand. Yet Young's own record in this area is far from pristine. For years, he has spread scientific misinformation about GMO foods. While experts have consistently judged GMO foods to be both safe and useful, Young in one song referred to them as poison. As a guest on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" in 2016, Young suggested that GMO foods caused "terrible diseases." It is hard not to wonder to what degree anti-biotech sentiments like these, ironically, might have fed the current skepticism of COVID-19 vaccines.

I also question whether Young's motives in the Spotify fracas were purely ideological. Just a few days ago, Young participated in the launch of a (temporary) satellite radio Neil Young channel. I don't begrudge him that business decision, and I will listen myself. Yet I also recognize that demand for his satellite radio channel could grow now that he is off Spotify. All the publicity stirred up by Young's departure from Spotify probably won't hurt, either.

Some people believe that Spotify is the real hero of this episode for standing up to cancel culture and defending the free speech rights of Joe Rogan and his guests. That is an understandable impulse, but keep in mind Spotify has been boasting that it has removed 20,000 other podcast episodes for spreading COVID-19 misinformation. It has taken down more than 40 back episodes of Rogan's podcast for similar reasons.

It is impossible for an outsider to judge the content of those 20,000 episodes. But whatever free speech principles the company may adhere to, it is enforcing them very selectively. That is their privilege, but they are hardly telling cancel culture to get lost.

And what if Spotify did heed calls to drop Rogan's podcast? Rogan might end up on another gated service. But if he returned to fully open-access podcasting, guests making scientifically dubious claims might have access to an even larger audience. So what's the point of attempting this kind of cancellation? To make ourselves feel better?

As for the Rogan podcast, it has been willing to accept a business deal with Spotify where those 40 back episodes are now gone. I find that, too, to be a perfectly acceptable business decision, but Rogan can't claim to be defending absolute free speech. (Late Sunday, Rogan promised to conduct better research into topics and to bring more balance into his podcast.)

I, for one, plan to continue all my preexisting relationships with the output of Rogan, Young, Mitchell and Spotify, where I am a paid premium subscriber. For one thing, I don't like the prospect of a world where we segregate our artistic and commercial alliances based on political disagreements.

But I will take away a broader lesson, namely that no one really has much of a coherent position in this fight.

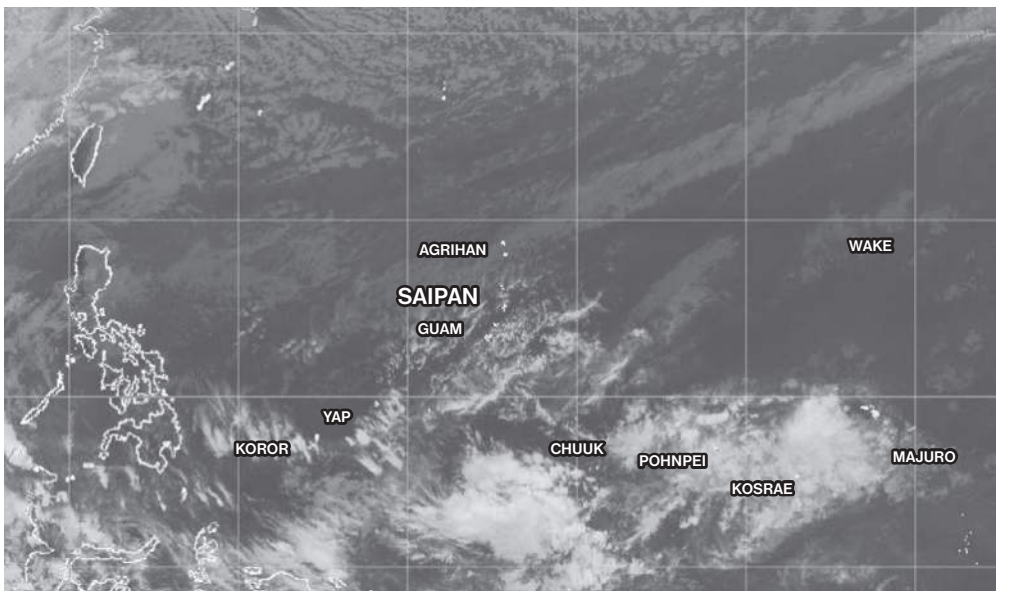
The more you understand that nobody's position really makes any sense, the more quickly you can embrace your inner "Heart of Gold," a song that is still on YouTube, right along with these speeches by Adolf Hitler.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy. Scattered light showers. northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Lows in the mid 70s.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Lows in the mid 70s.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Lows in the mid 70s.
86º 76º	86º 76	85º 75º	85º 75º	85º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 9:36 AM, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Prevailing northeast winds along with isolated light showers are present across the Marianas. The Ipan buoy shows an east swell between 5 to 7 feet with an eight second period.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

■ Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.

■ Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.

■ Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.

■ Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.

■ Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.

■ Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html

■ Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

■ Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.

■ Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

■ Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:

• Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.

• Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

• Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

• Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy/Wind	29 / 25 °F
Palau	Scattered Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Yap	Scattered Thunderstorms	29 / 26 °F
Chuuk	Scattered Thunderstorms	29 / 27 °F
Pohnpei	Scattered Thunderstorms	30 / 26 °F
Kosrae	PM Thunderstorms	30 / 27 °F
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	29 / 27 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:44 AM	18:17 PM
Tuesday	06:44 AM	18:18 PM
Wednesday	06:44 AM	18:18 PM
Thursday	06:43 AM	18:18 PM
Friday	06:43 AM	18:19 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	10:57	23:42 PM	-
Tuesday	11:34	-	18:02
Wednesday	-	12:13 PM	18:47
Thursday	-	12:55 PM	19:33
Friday	-	13:40 PM	20:22

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Rain	23 / 21 °F
Beijing	Partly Cloudy	6 / -7 °F
Hong Kong	Rainy	19 / 13 °F
Honolulu	Sunny	27 / 20 °F
London	Partly Cloudy	10 / 9 °F
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	10 / 9°F
Manila	Partly Cloudy	31 / 24°F
Melbourne	Sunny	29 / 15
Miami	Partly Cloudy	25 / 19 °F
New York	Rain/Snow Shower	6 / 2 °F
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	8 / 2 °F
Paris	Mostly Sunny	11/ 6 °F
Busan	Partly Cloudy	7 / 0 °F
Rome	Partly Cloudy	17 / 2 °F
Salem	Cloudy	11 / 10 °F
San Francisco	Sunny	18 / 6 °F
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	2 / -8 °F
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	9 / 1 °F
Washington, DC	Rain	7 / -1 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
11:39 PM	High Tide	1.33
05:50 AM	Low Tide	0.45
12:07 PM	High Tide	1.64
7:09 PM	Low Tide	0.39

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2022

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	6:30am	8:20am	1, 5
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 2)
TW9308	3:30PM	7:20PM	3, 7
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	3, 6

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

BX621	3:10PM	6:30PM	7

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

PR110	10:15pm	4:00am+1	4, 7
UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	Every 4 days (Jan 29-Mar 2)
OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	3, 6
TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	3, 7

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

BX622	8:00AM	1:10PM	7

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/ Thurs/Fri
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/ Thurs/Fri
3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Daily
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Ex-Guam Guard soldier gets 10 years for attempt to entice minor

HAGATÑA, Guam—Christopher De Leon Guerrero, 31, from Yigo, Guam, has been sentenced to 10 years in federal prison for attempted enticement of a minor, according to a U.S. Attorney's Office news release last Friday. The sentencing followed a guilty verdict at trial in November 2021. The court also ordered the defendant to serve five years of supervised release and pay a mandatory $200 special assessment fee.

The USAO news release headline describes De Leon Guerrero as a former Guam Army National Guard soldier. It stated that in a span of three days—from Nov. 17, 2020, through Nov. 20, 2020— De Leon Guerrero used his cell phone to chat on the Whispr and WhatsApp applications with a person he believed to be a 13-year-old female but was actually an undercover law enforcement agent.

During the next several days the defendant sent sexually explicit messages to entice the alleged minor to have sex with him. De Leon Guerrero made plans to meet at the minor's house, located on Andersen Air Force Base, when he believed the minor would be home alone. On Nov. 20, 2020, the defendant bought food and a box of condoms and drove to the minor's residence with the intent to engage in sexual activity with the minor. When De Leon Guerrero arrived at the house, he was met by federal law enforcement agents. After agreeing to speak to agents, the defendant admitted to writing numerous sexual messages to the alleged minor. He also stated that he was prepared to have sex with her even though she was only 13 years of age. A search of De Leon Guerrero's truck revealed the box of condoms and the cell phone he used during the offense.

"This case is another reminder of the dangers faced by children on the internet," said Shawn N. Anderson, U.S. Attorney for the Districts of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. "Our Project Safe Childhood initiative continues to target those who seek to prey on the young and vulnerable. The success of this priority program is due to the outstanding working relationships among our federal agencies. We applaud their efforts."

"The FBI will use all resources available to track, locate, and arrest those who seek to harm our children," said FBI special agent in charge Steven Merrill. "This sentence reflects the serious nature of the offense and acts as proof of our commitment, in collaboration with the Air Force Office of Special Investigation, to protect our children within our communities."

This case was part of the Project Safe Childhood initiative, a nationwide initiative by the U.S. Department of Justice to aggressively prosecute people who engage in the sexual victimization of children, possess, or receive child pornography, and fail to register as sex offenders. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, visit https://www.justice.gov/psc.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Air Force Office of Special Investigation. This case was prosecuted by April Owen, assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Guam. ***(USAO)***

NMI delegation pushes Commonwealth's interests at RNC

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Republican National Committee president Ronna Romney McDaniel, Committee-to-Elect chair James Ada, and Sen. Vinnie F. Sablan.

The interests of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands were pushed at the national level, with Se. Vinnie Sablan making sure of this on his personally-funded travel to Salt Lake City, Utah, last week for the Republican National Committee's Winter Meeting from Feb. 1 to 3.

"Although the gathering was party-centric, the discussions focused on improving the welfare of everyone in the communities that we serve and regardless of party affiliation," said Sablan, who is lieutenant governor candidate. The initiatives that were discussed with multiple leaders of our nation are geared toward ensuring quality and equitable application to our Commonwealth.

"This is the best way to enhance the livelihood of our people and islands," Sablan added.

The event, attended by numerous high caliber leaders from throughout the nation, zeroed in on rebuilding economies devastated by the global pandemic, and hardening defense infrastructures against man-made threats.

" I am honored to have met with many of the nation's leading voices specific to improving our peoples' lives and solidifying our borders against all threats—natural or man-made," stated Committee-to-Elect chair James Ada. "As entrusted leaders of our Marianas, I am confident that Gov. Ralph [DLG] Torres and lieutenant governor candidate Sablan will continue to deliver on this expectation.

"As a longtime member of the RNC, I can state resolutely that decisions made, and initiatives proffered by it, have benefitted all of the CNMI for decades," added Ada, who also attended the convention.

Aid to increase and spur economic restoration and to expand educational opportunities, through post-graduate options throughout the United States, were among the initiatives discussed.

The CNMI was the only U.S. territory recognized by the RNC for being fully represented at the meeting, and the duo's efforts will ensure that our voices are heard now and into the future, CNMI-GOP executive director Jason Osborne noted.

"The CNMI had an amazing presence at the meeting," said Osborne. "Lieutenant governor candidate Sablan and chairman Ada met with several key RNC members about shipbuilding, healthcare, and other job-generating opportunities in the CNMI."

The CNMI-GOP is encouraged by its dialogue with Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee regarding air travel and tourism, as well as multiple conversations with key leaders from Utah, New Mexico, Kentucky, California and Oregon.

Airfare, room, meals and ground transportation was funded by the CNMI-GOP.

Contact GOP president Candace Celis at cqcelis670@gmail.com for information on joining the movement to elect Torres-Sablan. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Lieutenant governor candidate Vinnie F. Sablan poses with Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee.

Hardt Eye Clinic, Ha'ani Co are ProaPerks partners

NMC

Hardt Eye Clinic is now a proud NMC ProaPerks partner. More information about their special promotion for ProaPerks card holders can be found at marianas.edu/proaperks.

Hardt Eye Clinic and Ha'ani Co are the latest companies to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks Partner, joining many other businesses and organizations that provide exclusive discounts and benefits for NMC students, employees, and alumni.

All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive a 10% discount on Oakley sunglasses at Hardt Eye Clinic and a 10% discount at Ha'ani Co.

NMC is in the introductory phase of rolling out the ProaPerks to alumni, students, and employees. For more information, visit marianas.edu/proaperks.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include NMC alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

NMC

Ha'ani Co is now a proud NMC ProaPerks partner. More information about their special promotion for ProaPerks card holders can be found at marianas.edu/proaperks.

Business

Biden sees US economy powering past pandemic

AP

President Joe Biden speaks about the January jobs report at the White House in Washington, Friday, Feb. 4, 2022.

WASHINGTON (AP)—That bleak jobs report the White House had been bracing for never arrived Friday.

Instead, President Joe Biden got the pleasant surprise that the U.S. economy had powered through the omicron wave of the coronavirus and posted 467,000 new jobs in January—along with strong revisions to job gains in the two prior months. It showed just how much the pandemic's grip on the economy has faded, though the nation is still grappling with high inflation.

"Our country is taking everything that COVID has to throw at us, and we've come back stronger," Biden declared at the White House.

The jobs report suggested the United States has entered a new phase in its recovery from the pandemic. And it capped something of a comeback week for the president.

Also on Friday, the House passed a bill to jumpstart computer chip production and development, a key step for reconciling differences with an earlier measure approved by the Senate. And a day earlier, outside the economy, the administration announced that U.S. forces had raided the home of the Islamic State leader, leading Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi to blow himself up.

Harvard University economist Jason Furman, a former adviser in the Obama White House, said the jobs report showed that employers and workers had gotten over the havoc caused by the pandemic.

The virus "is now one factor among many and no longer the dominant factor it was," said Furman. He pointed to broad strength across the report and the addition of 151,000 jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector—restaurants, hotels, entertainment and more in an area of the economy most prone to disruption from the pandemic.

Yet as the economy strengthens, a question for Biden personally—and his presidency—is whether he can stitch together the positives in a convincing way to revive his support that has declined in polls in the past year.

Who—and what—gets credit?

The infections caused by omicron had caused millions of Americans to miss work, leading to expectations that the economy lost jobs in January. Yet when the figures showed the virus had little impact, Republicans were quick to offer an alternative narrative—that the job gains reflected the expiration of unemployment benefits added with a push by Biden and his Democrats months earlier.

Delta: Put unruly passengers on no-fly list

NEW YORK (AP)—Any person convicted of a disruption on board a flight should be added to the national "no fly" list, Delta Air Lines told the U.S. Department of Justice.

In a letter to the Justice Department Attorney General Merrick Garland dated Thursday, Delta CEO Ed Bastian said there should be "zero tolerance" for any behavior that affects flight safety. Bastian noted that while such incidents of bad behavior represent a small fraction of overall flights on Delta, the rate of incidents on the airline has increased nearly 100% since 2019.

"This action will help prevent future incidents and serve as a strong symbol of the consequences of not complying with crew member instructions on commercial aircraft," Bastian wrote in the letter furnished to The Associated Press by Delta Air Lines.

Delta has, along with its industry partner Airlines for America, been pushing since last year for heightened reporting, investigation and prosecution of those who interfere with on-board safety. The airlines, based in Atlanta, said it has put nearly 1,900 people on Delta's "no-fly" list for refusing to comply with masking requirements and submitted more than 900 banned names to the Transportation Security Administration to pursue civil penalties.

A spokesperson with TSA, which enforces the FBI "no fly" list of potential terrorist threats, referred a reporter to the FBI since that agency maintains the database. Both the FBI and the Justice Department declined to comment. The Federal Aviation Administration cited 4.9 reported unruly incidents per 10,000 flights the week ending Jan. 23, according to its website.

In December, the TSA announced a new partnership with the FAA that would call for unruly airline passengers facing additional consequences for bad behavior under a new partnership. Under the alliance, the FAA will share information of passengers facing fines for unruly behavior with the TSA, which may remove the passenger from its pre-check screening eligibility, a privilege reserved for low-risk travelers.

Nation

AFTER LEAK POISONS WATER

US military crisis in Hawaii

HONOLULU (AP)—A giant U.S. government fuel storage installation hidden inside a mountain ridge overlooking Pearl Harbor has provided fuel to military ships and planes crisscrossing the Pacific Ocean since World War II.

Its very existence was a secret for years. Even after it was declassified, few people paid attention—until late last year, when jet fuel leaked into a drinking water well, showed up in tap water and sickened thousands in military housing.

Now the Navy is scrambling to contain what one U.S. lawmaker calls a "crisis of astronomical proportions." Native Hawaiians, veterans, liberals and conservatives across Hawaii are all pushing to shut down the tanks even though the Navy says they're vital to national security.

Military medical teams have examined more than 5,900 people complaining of symptoms including nausea, headaches and rashes. The military has moved about 4,000 mostly military families into hotels and has flown in water treatment systems from the U.S. mainland.

In the first six weeks since the water crisis emerged, the Navy spent more than $250 million addressing the public health emergency.

"Frankly, it's been a nightmare and a disaster. A total disaster," said U.S. Rep. Kaiali'i Kahele.

Kahele, a combat pilot who still serves as an officer in the Hawaii National Guard, is the lawmaker who characterized the crisis as astronomical at a hearing in December. An admiral said that the Navy takes the blame.

AP

In this Dec. 23, 2021, photo provided by the U.S. Navy, Rear Adm. John Korka, Commander, Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC), and Chief of Civil Engineers, leads Navy and civilian water quality recovery experts through the tunnels of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, near Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

"The Navy caused this problem, we own it and we're gonna fix it," Navy Rear Adm. Blake Converse, the deputy Pacific Fleet commander, told lawmakers last month.

The military built the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility in the early 1940s by excavating caverns within the mountain ridge to protect 20 fuel tanks from aerial attacks. Each tank is about the height of a 25-story building and can hold 12.5 million gallons (47.32 million liters.)

The tanks are connected to underground pipelines that send fuel about 2.5 miles (4 kilometers) to Pearl Harbor and to ships and planes used by the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines and Navy.

The Navy hasn't determined how petroleum got in the water. Officials are investigating a theory that jet fuel spilled from a ruptured pipe last May and somehow entered a fire suppression system drain pipe. They suspect fuel then leaked from the second pipe on Nov. 20, sending it into the drinking water well.

Within a week, military families started complaining about health problems.

Lauren Wright remembers her skin peeling, feeling nauseous and vomiting. Her symptoms disappeared only when she stopped drinking, showering and washing dishes with her home's water.

"I'm a proud Navy spouse, but this is not right—to do this to your families," she said.

Since early December, Wright, her sailor husband and their three children ages 7 to 17 have been among the thousands of military families living in Honolulu hotels paid for by the Navy so they can have clean water.

ACROSS THE NATION

Police: Shooter at apartment complex kills 2, then himself

BROWN DEER, Wis. (AP)—A man fatally shot two people at an apartment complex in a Milwaukee suburb and later died of an apparent self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said. Three people, including the suspect, were killed and one other person was injured in Saturday morning's shooting, which authorities believe began as a "domestic dispute," Brown Deer Police Chief Peter Nimmer said. He said the 26-year-old suspect shot himself and was taken to a hospital, where he died. Nimmer said a 31-year-old man and a 23-year-old woman were also killed. A 36-year-old man was shot in the leg. A child in the apartment was not hurt, he said.

Police: Gunman killed 4, then himself in Texas

CORSICANA, Texas (AP) — A gunman in Texas killed four members of his own family, including a child, before fatally shooting himself as officers approached, police said Saturday. Corsicana Police Chief Robert Johnson told the Corsicana Daily Sun that one shooting was reported overnight in Corsicana, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) south of Dallas, and the second was discovered by authorities in Frost, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) west of Corsicana. The suspect was identified as Kevin Milazzo, 41. Milazzo's 68-year-old stepfather and 61-year-old mother, William and Connie Mimms, were killed. The other victims were the suspect's 21-year-old son, Joshua Milazzo, and Hunter Freeman, the 4-year-old son of the suspect's former girlfriend. Two people were also wounded in the shooting in Corsicana and a third was wounded in Frost, Johnson said. All three were hospitalized in critical condition, he said. Authorities have not released the names of the injured.

Asia

Myanmar villagers say army soldiers torched 400 houses

BANGKOK (AP)—Residents of two villages in northwestern Myanmar said government soldiers burned down hundreds of houses this week, apparently while searching for members of an armed militia opposed to military rule.

The attack on Monday in northwestern Sagaing region, also reported by independent Myanmar media, came on the eve of the anniversary of the Feb. 1 army takeover that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, and underlined the fierce struggle for power.

The takeover triggered mass nonviolent protests nationwide, but when the military and police responded with deadly force, armed resistance arose in the cities and the countryside. Armed struggle has been especially active in the northwest, including Sagaing region and Chin state, despite the military's overwhelming superiority.

Residents of Mwe Tone village said on Thursday that 200 of 250 homes there were razed by fire, together with nearly 200 of the 800 houses in nearby Pan village. Similar numbers were reported by Myanmar media.

"As a farmer, I saved money for 15 years to build a house, and all that was left of my house was ashes. Not only my house but the whole village was turned into ash," said a 29-year-old Mwe Tone villager, speaking on condition of anonymity because he feared reprisal from authorities. "Now, we have nothing to eat or live with."

AP

Charred homes sit in piles of ash in Mwe Tone village of Pale township in the Sagaing region, Myanmar, Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022.

Photos showed water pumps, tractors and vehicles destroyed by the blaze, with farm animals also falling victims.

Myanmar's army has a reputation for using arson as one of its tactics in counterinsurgency operations. Troops are believed to have burned down as many as 200 villages in a brutal 2017 campaign in western Rakhine state that drove more than 700,000 Muslim Rohingya villagers to seek safety across the border in Bangladesh.

The army has been accused of crimes against humanity and genocide for its actions against the Rohingya, which also included the killings and rapes of civilians. In their current campaign against opponents of military rule, they have again been accused of razing homes and carrying out massacres of civilians.

The government's tactics have also caused a huge humanitarian crisis, with upwards of 300,000 people nationwide displaced from their homes, and the conflict often preventing assistance from reaching them.

Both armed and nonviolent resistance to last year's army takeover has prevented the military from consolidating its rule, with some experts saying the country has slipped into a civil war. The resistance generally employs hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, to which the army often responds with brute force.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Fire hits Russian Embassy in Manila

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A large fire broke out at the Russian Embassy in the Philippine capital, prompting the evacuation of employees and their families but causing no injuries, Russian and Filipino authorities said Saturday. Investigators were trying to determine the cause of the hours-long fire, which started on the second floor of the embassy in the financial district of Makati city in metropolitan Manila on Friday night and caused more than 100 million pesos ($2 million) in damages, the Philippine Bureau of Fire Protection said. More than a dozen firetrucks helped to extinguish the blaze in the upscale and tightly guarded Dasmarinas village, where several embassies and diplomatic residences are located.

S. Korea politicians criticize China over traditional dress

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Major South Korean presidential candidates accused China of laying claim to their culture after a performer wore a traditional Korean dress during the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics. A woman in a white and light purple hanbok dress marched along other performers apparently representing China's various ethnic groups as they carried the Chinese national flag during Friday's event at Beijing's National Stadium. The resentment expressed by South Korean politicians came amid public sensitivity about recent Chinese claims on the internet about the origins of major Korean cultural items, including kimchi, a national dish of fermented cabbage. But some South Koreans saw the reaction by their politicians as misguided, saying it was clear that the woman was representing an estimated 2 million ethnic Koreans living in China.

Pentagon: Deadly Afghan airport attack was not preventable

WASHINGTON (AP)—The military investigation into the deadly attack during the Afghanistan evacuation has concluded that a suicide bomber, carrying 20 pounds of explosives packed with ball bearings, acted alone, and that the deaths of more than 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members were not preventable. The blast at Abbey Gate outside the Kabul airport on Aug. 26 killed 11 U.S. Marines, a sailor and a soldier, who were screening the thousands of Afghans frantically trying to get onto one of the crowded flights leaving the country after the Taliban takeover. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attack. At the Pentagon on Friday, military officials laid out a detailed and graphic minute-by-minute account of the bombing. The bottom line, they said, was that those who died had wounds that were "so catastrophic" that they couldn't be overcome. And they said that earlier thoughts that it was a complex attack involving gunfire turned out to be unfounded.

World

Two Russia bombers fly over Belarus amid Ukraine strain

MOSCOW (AP)—Russia on Saturday sent a pair of long-range nuclear-capable bombers on patrol over its ally Belarus amid spiraling tensions over Ukraine.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the two Tu-22M3 bombers practiced interacting with the Belarusian air force and air defense during a four-hour mission. The flight followed several similar patrols over Belarus, which borders Ukraine to the north.

The mission came as the Kremlin has moved troops from Siberia and the Far East to Belarus for sweeping joint drills. The deployment added to the Russian military buildup near Ukraine, fueling Western fears of a possible invasion.

Russia has denied any plans of attacking Ukraine, but urged the U.S. and its allies to provide a binding pledge that they won't accept Ukraine into NATO, won't deploy offensive weapons, and will roll back NATO deployments to Eastern Europe. Washington and NATO have rejected the demands.

Moroccan boy trapped in well has died

IGHRAN, Morocco (AP)—A 5-year-old boy who was trapped for four days in a deep well in Morocco has died, the royal palace said Saturday.

Moroccan King Mohammed VI expressed his condolences to the boy's parents in a statement released by the palace.

The boy, Rayan, was pulled out Saturday night by rescuers after a lengthy operation that captivated global attention.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw the boy wrapped in a yellow blanket after he emerged from a tunnel dug specifically for the rescue.

His parents, Khaled Oram and Wassima Khersheesh had been escorted to an ambulance before the boy emerged. His plight had captured worldwide attention.

The palace statement said the king had been closely following the frantic rescue efforts by locals authorities, "instructing officials to use all means necessary to dig the boy out of the well and return him alive to his parents". The king hailed the rescuers for their relentless work and the community for landing support to Rayan's family.

Hundreds of villagers and others had gathered to watch the rescue operation.

Online messages of support and concern for the boy poured in from around the world as the rescue efforts dragged on for four days.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Emily Valles Vargas

March 29, 1960 - January 13, 2022

To everyone who supported us following the death of Emily, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude and appreciation for all your kindness, support, messages of sympathy, comfort and monetary donations during our bereavement. Your acts of love and kindness continue to be a great comfort to us in our time of sorrow. We would also like to thank TanHoldings, the Marianas Christian Church family for arranging the service, the NMTECH team who extended their helping hands during our tribulation and to our many friends and relatives.

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH.

The Vargas Family

Health & Wellness

This advertorial is sponsored by Tan Holdings HEALTH IS WEALTH Tan Siu Lin Foundation

MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES/TNS

A person receives a COVID-19 vaccination dose, during a free distribution of COVID-19 rapid test kits for those who received vaccination shots or booster shots, at Union Station on Jan. 7, 2022, in Los Angeles, California.

Study confirms effectiveness of COVID-19 booster vaccinations

By DEEDEE STIEPAN
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

A new study from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention confirms what Mayo Clinic and other experts have been saying: COVID-19 booster vaccinations improve protection against severe illness and hospitalization. The study examined people who had three doses of the Moderna or Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines, as well as whether it was a booster dose or the No. 3 dose for people who are immunocompromised.

"The third dose actually decreased COVID-19-associated hospitalizations significantly— more than the two doses alone," says Dr. Abinash Virk, a Mayo Clinic infectious diseases specialist.

Virk says much has been learned about the effectiveness of booster vaccinations in the short time they've been available.

"Clearly, having the No. 3 dose—the additional dose for immunocompromised people or the booster in healthy people—does further improve your protection against hospitalization and severe disease."

When should you get a booster vaccination?

Mayo Clinic recommends getting the COVID-19 booster vaccination five months after you've completed your last dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine, or two months after the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

These recommendations also apply to those who were recently infected with COVID-19.

"If somebody has had their primary series and they got COVID-19 infection, they should get their COVID-19 booster as long as it's been five months since their last dose of the messenger RNA (Moderna or Pfizer) vaccine, and they're out of isolation," says Virk.

Virk says there's still a lot to be learned about COVID-19 infection and natural immunity. For that reason, people shouldn't rely on protection from natural immunity alone. It is safer to get COVID-19 protection from getting vaccinated than from getting COVID-19 itself. That's because COVID-19 carries risks of severe disease and other complications.

"We know people can still get reinfected. We've seen that with omicron already.

The sooner you get vaccinated, the higher your immunity will be, the more the protection you will have from getting COVID-19 again."

Reducing your risk of cancer

By LAUREL KELLY
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

February is National Cancer Prevention Month. Also, Friday is World Cancer Day, which is a global initiative to raise awareness, improve education and promote action to create a cancer-free world. This is a good time to learn about what you can do to reduce your risk of developing cancer.

The advice on preventing cancer can be confusing. It may seem to change, and sometimes a cancer prevention tip recommended in one study is contradicted by another study.

In many cases, what is known about cancer prevention is still evolving. However, it's well-accepted that your chances of developing cancer are affected by your lifestyle. A few simple lifestyle changes can make a difference in your risk of developing many types of cancer, including lung, breast, colon, prostate, cervical and skin cancers.

If you're concerned about reducing your risk of developing cancer, here are seven cancer prevention tips to consider:

- Don't use tobacco.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active.
- Protect yourself from the sun.
- Get vaccinated for hepatitis B and HPV.
- Avoid risky behaviors. This includes practicing safe sex and not sharing needles.
- Get regular medical care.

Connect with others talking about preventing cancer and living well with cancer in the Cancer support group on Mayo Clinic Connect, an online patient community moderated by Mayo Clinic.

Healthy Living

Low carbs

How two popular protein-rich foods – often relied on by people on a low-carbohydrate weight loss diet – stack up:

	Hard-boiled eggs, two large	Tuna, packed in water, 3.5 oz. (35 g)
Calories	310 g	115 g
Carbohydrate	2.2 g	None
Protein	25 g	26 g
Fat, total	21 g	0.8 g

Source: U.S. Agricultural Research Service, TNS Photo Service

Eczema occurs in people of all ages

By JASON HOWLAND
MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK

A prevailing misconception is that eczema is only a childhood skin condition. Atopic dermatitis, or eczema, is common in kids, but it also happens to adults.

Atopic dermatitis is a sensitivity disease of the skin, similar to asthma in the lungs, hay fever in the sinuses and food allergies in the gut.

"It's a multisystem disorder. Inflammation affects the skin, and the skin is more sensitive than usual," says Dr. Dawn Davis, a Mayo Clinic dermatologist.

It's a chronic condition and tends to flare periodically. The symptoms vary.

"Atopic dermatitis tends to be red, weepy, crusty, itchy, flaky patches, like oval or circular-shaped areas on the skin," says Dr. Davis.

DREAMSTIME/TNS

The first basic component of eczema treatment is taking care of sensitive skin.

The darker your skin tone is, the more the inflammation can be disguised.

"Our skin is like a brick wall. And over time as we age, or genetically if we are predisposed to sensitive skin, it can look like a wicker basket more than a brick wall. And that makes it more vulnerable to inflammation and to environmental triggers," says Dr. Davis.

Adult eczema often occurs in patches on areas of the body prone to friction or sweat.

"It might be where your waistband would sit or where your socks or shoes would rub. If you have a watch, (it might occur) where you would wear your watch, or if you have a headband or certain things that you wear along your neck, like a necklace or a tie," she says.

The first basic component of eczema treatment is taking care of sensitive skin.

"It's important to bathe regularly. It's important to hydrate the skin with a moisturizer that is hypoallergenic. It's important to monitor for infection," says Dr. Davis.

If those self-care steps don't help, your dermatologist may prescribe topical or oral medications, or other therapies.

Life & Style

Elizabeth the Steadfast: Queen marks 70 years on throne

LONDON (AP)—Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor wasn't born to wear the crown. But destiny intervened.

The woman who became Queen Elizabeth II will mark 70 years on the throne Sunday, an unprecedented reign that has made her a symbol of stability as the United Kingdom navigated an age of uncertainty.

From her early days as a glamorous young royal in glittering tiaras to her more recent incarnation as the nation's grandmother, the queen has witnessed the end of the British Empire, the advent of multiculturalism, the rise of international terrorism, and the challenges posed by Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. In a world of relentless change, she has been a constant—representing the U.K.'s interests abroad, applauding the nation's successes and commiserating in its failures, and always remaining above the fray of politics.

(AP PHOTO, ARTHUR EDWARDS, POOL, FILE)

This photo combo shows Britain's Queen Elizabeth II during the State Opening of Parliament, London, in April, 1966 on the left and Nov. 15, 2006, on the right.

That constancy should earn Elizabeth a royal epithet like those of her predecessors such as William the Conqueror, Edward the Confessor and Alfred the Great, said royal historian Hugo Vickers.

"I've always thought she should be called Elizabeth the Steadfast," Vickers told The Associated Press. "I think it's a perfect way of describing her. She wasn't necessarily expecting to be queen, and she embraced that duty."

As the elder daughter of King George V's second son, Elizabeth, now 95, was expected to live the life of a minor royal when she was born on April 21, 1926. Dogs and horses, a country house, a suitable match—a comfortable but uneventful life—seemed her future.

But everything changed a decade later when her uncle, King Edward VIII, abdicated so he could marry the American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Elizabeth's father became King George VI, making the young princess heir apparent.

George VI, whose struggles to overcome a stutter were portrayed in the 2010 film "The King's Speech," endeared himself to the nation when he refused to leave London as bombs fell during the early months of World War II.

Elizabeth followed her father in leading by example, joining the Auxiliary Territorial Service in early 1945, becoming the first female member of the Royal Family to join the armed services as a full-time active member. On her 21st birthday, she dedicated her life to the nation and the Commonwealth, the voluntary association of states that grew out of the British Empire.

"I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong," she said in a radio address broadcast around the world.

In 1952, the young princess embarked on a tour of the Commonwealth in place of her ailing father. She was at a remote Kenyan lodge, where she and her husband Prince Philip watched baboons from the treetops, when she heard her father had died.

Queen backs plan to one day call son's wife "Queen Camilla"

LONDON (AP)—Queen Elizabeth II offered her support Saturday to have the Duchess of Cornwall become Queen Camilla—using a special Platinum Jubilee message to make a significant decision in shaping the future of the British monarchy.

In remarks delivered on the eve of the 70th anniversary of her accession to the throne, the monarch expressed a "sincere wish" that Camilla be known as "Queen Consort" when her eldest son Charles, the Prince of Wales, succeeds her as expected to the throne. In giving her blessing, the popular and respected sovereign is placing significant heft behind the move.

''When, in the fullness of time, my son Charles becomes king, I know you will give him and his wife Camilla the same support that you have given me," the monarch wrote. "And it is my sincere wish that, when that time comes, Camilla will be known as Queen Consort as she continues her own loyal service."

The message ties up a loose end that has hung over the House of Windsor since Charles' divorce from the popular Princess Diana.

It took years for many in Britain to forgive Charles, the man whose admitted infidelity brought such pain to "the people's princess" before she died in a Paris car crash in 1997. But the public mood softened after Charles married Camilla Parker Bowles in 2005 and she became the Duchess of Cornwall.

Although Camilla played a significant role in the breakup of Charles' first marriage, her down-to-Earth style and sense of humor eventually won over many Britons. Her warmth softened the Charles' hard edges and made him appear more approachable, if not happier, as he cut ribbons, unveiled plaques and waited for his chance to reign.

Jennifer Garner celebrated as Hasty Pudding's Woman of Year

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP)—"Alias" actor Jennifer Garner was honored as Hasty Pudding Theatrical's Woman of the Year at a parade in historic Harvard Square Saturday afternoon.

Garner was paraded through the streets of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Despite the frigid temperatures, Garner was all smiles as she waved to the hundreds of spectators along the parade route.

"This is crazy. This is nuts," Garner said, with jubilance in her voice, as she observed the large crowds from a red Bentley.

Garner, 49, will be bestowed the group's iconic pudding pot at a traditional roast Saturday evening. Harvard's famed theater troupe will also be performing its latest production, "Ship Happens," after the roast. This will be the organization's third time featuring both men and women in their cast and its first production in two years since the coronavirus pandemic began in 2020.

At the parade, Garner was accompanied by several of the theater troupe's members, who were dressed in elaborate costumes and drag.

Joe Rogan apologizes for racial slur

NEW YORK (AP)—Spotify's popular U.S. podcaster Joe Rogan apologized Saturday after a video compilation surfaced that showed him using a racial slur in clips of episodes over a 12-year span.

Rogan

The mea culpa came after Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter India.Arie posted the compilation on Instagram and announced that she was removing her music from Spotify's streaming service because of it.

Spotify is facing growing discontent from artists over Rogan's podcast, which it reportedly paid more than $100 million to license. Last month, musician Neil Young removed his music over concerns that Rogan was magnifying vaccine skepticism.

In a video posted on his Instagram account, Rogan, who hosts a podcast called "The Joe Rogan Experience," said his use of the N-word in the compilation Arie posted was the "most regretful and shameful thing that I've ever had to talk about publicly." But he said the clips were "taken out of context."

"It's not my word to use. I am well aware of that now, but for years I used it in that manner," he said during the six-minute video on his Instagram account. "I never used it to be racist because I'm not racist."

He did not specify which years he used the racial slur.

Pushy sister-in-law tries to force couple to retire

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR ABBY: My sister-in-law is increasingly overbearing and abusive to me. It has always been a problem, but I ignored her nasty comments. Now, I am finally sick of it.

During the last year, she has begun to insist my husband retire. She wants us to close the doors of a business we have operated for 43 years. We are highly successful. We have more than 23 employees who depend on their salaries for their livelihood, and the business is valuable.

I have tried to tell her nicely to butt out, but it has only made her more abusive. I can't draw Social Security yet, so I wouldn't have an income. My husband won't say much about it. Now she's soliciting our friends to call us and harass us about retiring. Help!

STILL WORKING IN VIRGINIA

DEAR STILL WORKING: If anyone tells you to retire and sell your business, an appropriate response would be, "I know you mean well, but when we're ready to retire, we will let you know."

***

DEAR ABBY: I have been involved with someone for more than a year, and he has proposed. Being in a long-distance relationship has been very difficult. In the beginning, he was very attentive. He lives in Tennessee, and I am in Oregon.

I love him very much and I thought we were going to have a future together. However, he is very busy with his career so it's difficult making plans. We have set wedding dates a couple of times, and it's always getting put on hold.

My problem lately is he hasn't been responding to me by text or email. He said he loves me, but I don't understand why he hasn't gotten ahold of me. What do I do now?

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

DEAR HANGING: I wish you had mentioned how long it has been since he has communicated with you. Could he be sick, injured or incarcerated? If it is none of those and it has been more than a couple of weeks, it would be fair to assume his enthusiasm has cooled, and you should reconsider the long-distance engagement.

***

DEAR ABBY: I am a nonbeliever and I need advice about how to respond when people "send prayers, are praying for you and yours, etc." There are countless "prayer" messages on social media for all occasions. I never know what to say because I don't pray, nor do I send prayers to anyone. Sending "warm thoughts" seems lame. What would be an appropriate response?

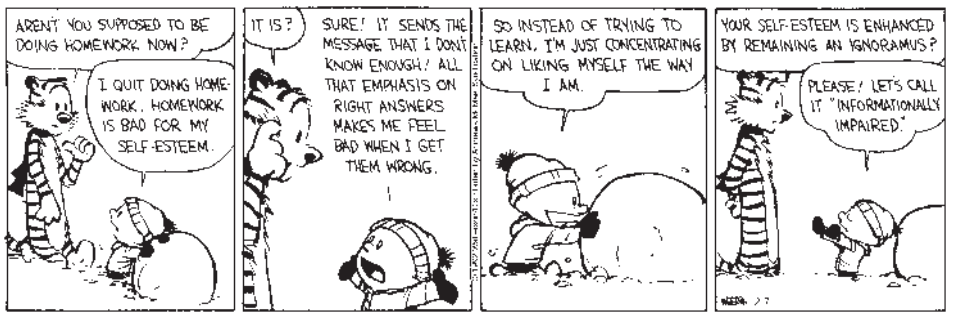
AWKWARD IN NEW MEXICO

DEAR AWKWARD: You are not obligated to mention anything about God or prayers. If prayers are addressed to you, thank the sender for their thoughtfulness. If they are addressed to you and your family, include the word "we." If, however, the life challenge is someone else's, some appropriate responses might be, "I am sorry for your pain. I am sending warm thoughts, love, (etc.), with wishes for a speedy recovery, deepest sympathy, (etc.)."

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson

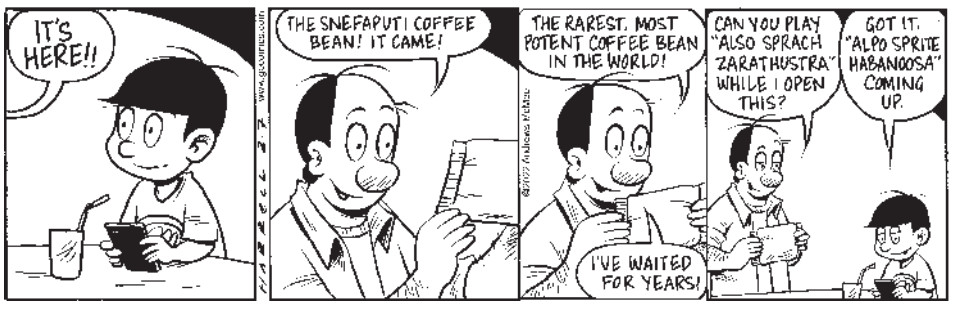

AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE DOING HOMEWORK NOW?
I QUIT DOING HOMEWORK. HOMEWORK IS BAD FOR MY SELF-ESTEEM.
IT IS?
SURE! IT SENDS THE MESSAGE THAT I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH! ALL THAT EMPHASIS ON RIGHT ANSWERS MAKES ME FEEL BAD WHEN I GET THEM WRONG.
SO INSTEAD OF TRYING TO LEARN, I'M JUST CONCENTRATING ON LIKING MYSELF THE WAY I AM.
YOUR SELF-ESTEEM IS ENHANCED BY REMAINING AN IGNORAMUS?
PLEASE! LET'S CALL IT "INFORMATIONALLY IMPAIRED."

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


IT'S HERE!!
THE SNEFAPUTI COFFEE BEAN! IT CAME!
THE RAREST, MOST POTENT COFFEE BEAN IN THE WORLD!
I'VE WAITED FOR YEARS!
CAN YOU PLAY "ALSO SPRACH ZARATHUSTRA" WHILE I OPEN THIS?
GOT IT. "ALPO SPRITE HABANOOSA" COMING UP.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Ginormous
4 Ritzy violin
9 Hotel amenity
12 Possess
13 Part of TNT
14 "Mazel —!"
15 TV show hosted by Don Cornelius
17 Mimic
18 In the manner of
19 Former Disney head Michael
21 Method
24 Grit
25 Sound of delight
26 Knock
28 Famous
31 Oodles
33 Ballot marks
35 Corduroy ridge
36 Oared
38 Humorist
40 Fib
41 Jog
43 Paint basecoat
45 Mexican pastry
47 Recipe abbr.
48 Attila, e.g.
49 Cajole
54 Hearty brew
55 Strictly — nous
56 Pear-shaped fruit
57 Mas' mates
58 Rib
59 Vat

DOWN

1 Derek and Diddley
2 — Jima
3 Bearded beast
4 Elk's hom
5 "Chocolat" studio
6 One-time link
7 Samples
8 Sea east of Sicily
9 Demonstrate pride
10 Vatican leader
11 Say it's so
16 Long. crosser
20 Winter fall
21 Fly high
22 Modern "carpe diem"
23 Songs from "Wicked," e.g.
27 Church seat
29 Writer Wiesel
30 Antelope's playmate
32 Region (Abbr.)
34 Convent denizens
37 County on the English Channel
39 Exam taker
42 "Ye olde" place
44 Suitable
45 Bloke
46 Luau dance
50 JFK info
51 Toward the stern
52 Lucy of "Kill Bill"
53 Old CIA foe

Solution time: 26 mins.

A	A	A	■	A	H	M	■	F	L	A	P	S
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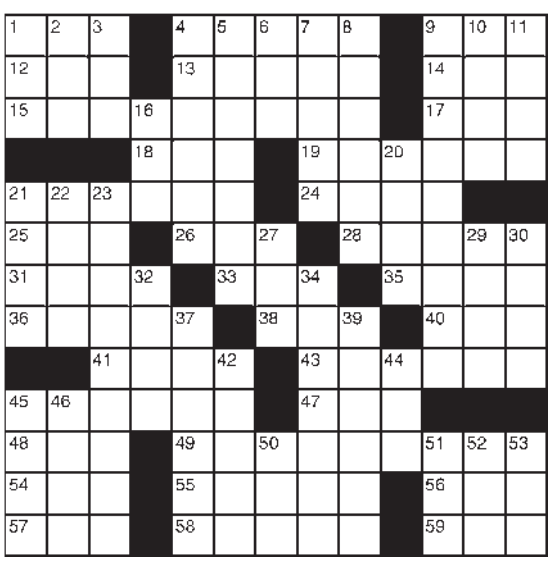
C	H	A	N	■	R	B	I	■	C	B	O	E
■	■	■	J	O	I	N	S	■	H	V	A	■
F	O	R	B	■	D	D	E	N	■	L	I	V
A	R	I	E	L	■	E	R	A	■	O	N	E
R	O	G	E	■	■	N	O	S	■	W	E	S

Last Friday's Answer 02/07



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Ashton Kutcher, 44; Chris Rock, 57; Garth Brooks, 60; James Spader, 62.

Happy Birthday: Address unsettled issues. Face your nemesis head-on, and free yourself of matters that are standing between you and the goals you want to meet this year. Set high standards, and show everyone what you can do. Take control of your life, future and happiness. Use your imagination, physical strength and courage, and success will be yours. Your numbers are 9, 12, 21, 27, 36, 39, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Just do it. Don't wait for someone else to start first. Be competitive, and force issues to get a head start. Live up to your expectations, and leave nothing to chance. Promote and present. Adjust your skills to fit trends. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Put your heart and soul into whatever you want to pursue. Learn all you can, and take physical action to turn your idea into something concrete. Explore your options, possibilities and potential gain if you stick to your plan. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Don't be too quick to share what you are doing. Take precautions when dealing with someone eager to pick your brain. Someone will mislead you if given a chance. Ask pertinent questions, and don't buy into something unfamiliar to you. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Line up a good team to help you reach your goals. Choose people who share your concerns and have skills that you don't. An unusual partnership will develop with someone entirely different. An opportunity will change your life. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* An emotional incident can hurt your reputation. Don't mix business with pleasure or give someone the ammunition to make you look bad in front of your peers or superiors. Play your cards close to your chest, and take the high road. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You are overdue for a change. Consider what you want to incorporate into your life, and put a plan in place that will help you reach your target. Share your ambition with someone you love or who can contribute to your success. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Focus on staying within budget while improving your comfort and convenience at home. Maintaining a healthy balance will ease stress and encourage you to be more disciplined regarding entertainment and unnecessary spending. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Talk to someone you trust, and you'll gain insight into the possibilities surrounding an idea you want to pursue. Positive feedback and support will encourage you to make a move that will enhance your prospects. A partnership will help shape your plans. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Forgo being too open about your ideas or life. Someone will use the information you share against you. Do what's in your best interest, and you'll sidestep situations that have the potential to turn into unwanted drama. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Tidy up and put things in order. Preparation will help you accomplish what you set out to do so you can enjoy the fruits of your labor. Express your feelings through actions. Encourage someone you love to feel appreciated. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Be aware of what others choose to do, but take the path that suits you best. Living in someone's shadow will lead to regret, not accomplishment. Set your sights on what excites you most, and follow through with your plans. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Be open about what you want, and what you receive will surprise you. Negotiate on your behalf, and counter with something unique. Mix business with pleasure; you'll connect with someone influential. Use your charm, intelligence and insight to win favors. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are enthusiastic, resourceful and kind. You are curious and enticing.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

			8		3		4	
5							1	
6		8		5	2		3	
			2		5		7	1
3			7	4	1			9
7	4		9		8			
	8		3	7		1		2
	7							6
	9		5		6			

Difficulty Level ★ 2/07

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Last Friday's Answer

1	7	4	2	5	8	9	6	3
5	2	6	3	9	1	4	7	8
3	8	9	4	6	7	2	5	1
6	3	8	1	2	5	7	9	4
2	9	7	8	3	4	6	1	5
4	5	1	6	7	9	8	3	2
9	4	5	7	1	2	3	8	6
7	6	2	5	8	3	1	4	9
8	1	3	9	4	6	5	2	7

Difficulty Level ★★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

COUNTLESS BLESSINGS IN LIFE — Solution: 9 letters

P	H	T	U	R	T	G	T	H	S	L	R	S	S	A
O	E	M	U	S	I	C	T	S	S	E	Y	D	T	L
S	A	R	E	T	I	L	E	B	E	A	A	I	R	U
I	L	Y	S	N	A	N	R	I	L	R	D	K	O	F
T	T	L	L	E	T	A	C	T	B	N	H	X	P	K
I	H	O	W	I	V	O	N	O	U	D	T	A	S	N
V	V	O	F	E	M	E	R	I	M	Ⓜ	R	L	C	A
E	E	H	L	E	V	A	R	T	M	Ⓔ	I	E	O	H
G	F	C	H	T	I	A	F	A	N	Ⓐ	B	R	M	T
A	R	S	T	S	U	R	T	T	N	Ⓛ	L	O	F	C
R	I	A	E	R	I	P	S	N	I	C	D	S	O	E
U	E	F	R	E	E	D	O	M	E	S	E	E	R	T
O	N	E	L	P	O	E	P	W	I	L	L	S	T	O
C	D	D	N	E	K	E	E	W	G	O	A	L	S	R
E	S	O	P	R	U	P	E	A	C	E	S	T	E	P

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Animals, Birthday, Bless, Brave, Comfort, Courage, Faith, Family, Fitness, Freedom, Friends, Goals, Health, Income, Inspire, Kids, Learn, Love, Meal, Mentor, Music, Parents, Peace, People, Perseverance, Pets, Positive, Protect, Purpose, Relax, Rest, Roses, Safe, School, Sports, Talent, Thankful, Travel, Trust, Truth, Wealth, Weekend, Will, Wisdom

Last Friday's Answer: Citizen Kane

To purchase **WONDERWORD** books, visit www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480.

LeBron returns with triple-double, Lakers beat Knicks in OT

LOS ANGELES (AP)—LeBron James returned from a five-game absence due to injury and had a triple-double of 29 points, 13 rebounds, 10 assists, and the Los Angeles Lakers rallied from a 21-point, second-quarter deficit, beating the New York Knicks 122-115 in overtime Saturday night.

James missed the games due to swelling in his left knee, but came back to play in a nationally televised game and with the Lakers three games under .500.

"He's incredible. I guess the time off served him well," coach Frank Vogel said. "We didn't want to play him 39 minutes, but overtime impacted that.

"He was special tonight. Just a great performance."

It was the Lakers' largest comeback since they rallied from 21 down at Denver in 2015.

James was 13 of 24 from the field and tied a season high in rebounds. The Lakers led the entire five-minute overtime after James drove the floor and dunked after RJ Barrett turned it over.

It was James' fourth triple-double of the season, the 103rd of his career and fifth against the Knicks.

"After the first quarter, the knee loosened up a lot more, my mind loosened up a lot more and I was able just to play basketball," James said. "Happy I was able to make a few plays to help us win."

Malik Monk scored 29 points and Anthony Davis added 28 points and 17 rebounds for the Lakers, who had dropped four of five coming in.

"He's doing LeBron type things — efficient from the field; he did what he was supposed to do," said Davis, who had a double-double for the fourth straight game. "He's a big part of our team with his voice, leadership and playmaking ability. He came back and showed it."

AP

Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James, left, passes while under pressure from New York Knicks center Mitchell Robinson during the first half of an NBA basketball game Saturday, Feb. 5, 2022, in Los Angeles.

Barrett scored a career-high 36 points, and Julius Randle had 32 points and 16 rebounds for New York. The Knicks have lost eight of their last 10 games.

"That's a game we should've won. I felt like overall obviously we played well, but not good enough," Barrett said.

Los Angeles trailed 71-56 at halftime before rallying in the third quarter, outscoring the Knicks 31-13. The Lakers were down 75-61 less than 2 1/2 minutes into the quarter before going on a 21-6 run over a nearly six-minute span to take the lead.

Monk had 10 of his 18 third-quarter points during the run, including a pair of 3-pointers. Davis scored four, including a driving layup with 3:50 remaining to give the Lakers an 82-80 lead. Los Angeles took an 87-84 lead into the fourth quarter.

The Lakers extended extend their lead to 108-99 with 2:22 remaining, before the Knicks went on a 13-3 run and forced overtime. Barrett fueled the run with seven points, including a 3-pointer with 8.7 seconds remaining that tied the score at 111-all. James had a chance to win it, but missed a 3-pointer in the final second.

New York came out firing and led 11-0 in the first 1:42. The Knicks led 42-29 at the end of the first quarter after Barrett and Randle combined to go 10 of 12 from the field and score 29 points.

The Knicks extended their lead to 68-47 with 1:57 remaining in the first half on a running dunk by Randle before the Lakers went on a 9-3 run to get within 15 at halftime.

"I liked the start of the game. We probably didn't close out the second quarter as well as we liked," Knicks coach Tom Thibodeau said. "And then the third quarter was problematic. So, then we had a good fight down the stretch, and didn't get it done."

Suns 95, Wizards 80

In Washington, Deandre Ayton had 20 points and 16 rebounds in an efficient 24 minutes and NBA-leading Phoenix rebounded from a streak-ending loss to beat short-handed Washington.

Ayton, playing his third game since returning from a sprained right ankle, and the Suns bounced back from a loss Thursday night at Atlanta that ended their 11-game winning streak.

Phoenix led by 25 before the midpoint of the second quarter, 27 at half and 36 in the third quarter. The Wizards set offensive season lows — and the Suns defensive bests — for points in a quarter (11 in the second), half (33 in the first) and game.

Chris Paul added 14 points and nine assists for Phoenix, Cameron Johnson and Mikal Bridges each scored 12 points, and Devin Booker had 11. At 42-10, the Suns moved 2 1/2 games ahead of Golden State for the league lead.

Montrezl Harrell scored 15 points for Washington. The Wizards have lost seven of eight.

Bucks 137, Trail Blazers 108

In Portland, Ore., Bobby Portis Jr. had a season-high 30 points, hitting six 3-pointers, and Milwaukee Bucks handed Portland its fifth straight loss.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 29 points, with a season-high four 3-pointers, and nine rebounds. Portis was 11 of 13 from the field and 6 of 8 from 3-point range.

Anfernee Simons and Ben McLemore each had 19 points for Portland.

Grizzlies 135, Magic 115

In Orlando, Fla., Ja Morant scored 33 points in three quarters and Memphis led by 31 points against NBA-worst Orlando.

Morant scored 22 points in the first half to help Memphis win its second straight and fifth in six games. The Grizzlies had a 14-0 run in the first quarter and led 76-56 at the half.

Cole Anthony scored 17 of his 22 points in the first half for Orlando.

Heat 104, Hornets 86

In Charlotte, N.C., Jimmy Butler scored 27 points, Bam Adebayo added 20 points and 12 rebounds and Miami handed slumping Charlotte to its fourth straight loss.

Tyler Herro had 19 points behind five 3-pointers for Miami. The Heat scored 27 points off 20 turnovers by Charlotte while holding the Hornets to 38.4% shooting from the floor.

Terry Rozier had 16 points for Charlotte.

Kings 113, Thunder 103

In Sacramento, Calif., Harrison Barnes had 24 points and nine rebounds and Sacramento held on to beat Oklahoma City.

Tyrese Haliburton added 13 points and a career-high 17 assists to help the Kings win for the second time in three games following a seven-game losing streak. Moe Harkless also had a double-double for Sacramento with 18 points and 11 rebounds.

Josh Giddey scored a season-high 24 points for Oklahoma City.

Hall of Fame coach Bill Fitch dies, led Celtics to '81 title

CLEVELAND (AP)—Bill Fitch helped turn bad NBA teams into winners, and the Celtics back into champions.

A two-time coach of the year who guided Boston to one of its championships during a Hall of Fame coaching career spanning three decades, has died. He was 89.

Indiana Pacers coach Rick Carlisle, president of the National Basketball Coaches Association, said Fitch's daughter told him her father died Wednesday night in Lake Conroe, Texas, surrounded by family.

"Coach Fitch's numerous accomplishments pale in comparison to the giant impact he had on countless members of the basketball world in a legendary career that spanned 40-plus years," said Carlisle, who broke in as an assistant under Fitch with New Jersey. "His mark on the NBA game is indelible."

Fitch coached for 25 seasons in the NBA, starting with the expansion Cleveland Cavaliers in 1970. He was Larry Bird's first pro coach in 1979, won a title with the Celtics in 1981 and spent time with Houston, New Jersey and the Los Angeles Clippers.

While he had his greatest success in Boston, Fitch may be best remembered for his early seasons with the Cavs.

He helped develop a young team that won just 15 games in its first season and improved steadily before making the playoffs in 1976 and shocking the Washington Bullets in what became known as the "Miracle of Richfield."

Fitch was chosen coach of the year that season.

"Our franchise lost a great man and Rock that it was built on," Cavs great Austin Carr wrote on Twitter. "Coach Fitch, may he rest in peace, love u Coach."

Fitch spent nine seasons in Cleveland, winning 304 games.

"Coach Fitch earned the love and respect of his Cavaliers players as he embedded a high standard of accountability and a belief system that he felt was a reflection of the team's motto as a 'group of daring, fearless men, whose life's pact was never surrender, no matter what the odds,' something that continues to be greatly valued by those he coached and worked with on and off the court," the Cavs said in a statement.

"Coach Fitch was a great friend and trusted mentor and teacher to so many across the entire basketball community, while his impact on the game, and the lives of those he touched, spanned multiple generations. He became a lifelong friend to many members of the Cavaliers organization."

Fitch was hired by Red Auerbach and the Celtics in 1979, the same year Bird arrived in Boston, which was coming off the two worst seasons in the famed franchise's history. The Celtics went 61-21 in Fitch's first season and won the championship the following year by beating the Rockets in six games.

"Fitch's deep knowledge of the game, toughness, and dry wit made him a perfect fit for Boston and the Celtics," the team said in a statement. "Fitch had already built a reputation as a turnaround artist, and his ability to get the best out of his players paid immediate dividends as Fitch orchestrated what was at the time the best turnaround in NBA history, vaulting to a 61-21 record."

Fitch went 242-86 in his four seasons in Boston.

He went from there to Houston for five seasons (1983-88), taking the Rockets to the Finals in 1986 with a team powered by Hakeem Olajuwon and Ralph Sampson.

Fitch joined the Nets in 1989 and took a young team that won just 17 games in his first season to 40 victories and a playoff berth in his third year.

He wrapped up his coaching odyssey with the woebegone Clippers, leading them to the playoffs in his third season before retiring in 1998.

Fitch, who had a 944-1106 record, was elected to the National Basketball Hall of Fame in 2019.

Born in Davenport, Iowa, Fitch coached at his alma mater, Coe College, before stops at Minnesota, Bowling Green and North Dakota, where he saw promise in a young forward named Phil Jackson, who went on to win 10 NBA titles as a coach.

Pro Bowl players echo concerns brought by Flores' lawsuit

LAS VEGAS (AP)—The football fun and games surrounding the Pro Bowl have not stopped some of the NFL's top players from thinking about the racial inequities spotlighted by former Miami Dolphins coach Brian Flores' discrimination lawsuit against the league.

"I think it goes without saying that we have a problem," Matthew Slater, the New England Patriots' veteran receiver and special teams ace, told The Associated Press.

"I don't know if it's the process," he added. "I don't know what you want to attribute it to. But you look at the end result for our league to be composed of 60% African-Americans and only have one African-American coach, one minority owner, not a lot of representation within front office and upper management — to me, it says we have a problem."

Slater's opinion was echoed by other pros Saturday after the AFC Pro Bowl team's light practice at Las Vegas Ballpark, the suburban baseball diamond where both teams are working out before Sunday's game at Allegiant Stadium. The Pro Bowl is back on after a one-year hiatus, and the All-Star game is making its Sin City debut after the previous four editions were held in Orlando.

But Flores' lawsuit served as a reminder to even these elite players that their sport has ample work to do on racial equality.

"I feel like African-American coaches sometimes get the short end of the stick, so we've just got to find a way to get that going," Indianapolis Colts linebacker Darius Leonard told the AP.

"You know, a lot of owners ... behind closed doors say a lot of things, and as players, we don't get to see that," Leonard added. "And coaches, with Brian, you lose and it (stinks), and you want to make a change. Somehow we've got to find a way to make an even platform for all races, not just Blacks or white, but for all races. We've got to make sure that it's equal opportunities for everyone."

Flores sued the league and three teams this week over alleged racist hiring practices for coaches and top executives. The suit claims the league remains "rife with racism" even as the NFL publicly champions racial equality.

Many players and coaches have publicly backed Flores, who went 24-25 in three seasons as the Dolphins' head coach before his controversial firing last month. Flores then interviewed for the New York Giants' coaching vacancy, and the experience played a role in his decision to file the lawsuit.

"I just feel like that situation needs to work itself out, man," Los Angeles Chargers safety Derwin James said. "Because we all need to learn the facts of both sides of the story, and we've got to really see what's going on. Like I say, I support Coach Flores throughout everything. And like I said, I just want to know what the truth is."

AP

Miami Dolphins head coach Brian Flores during the second half of an NFL football game against the New England Patriots, Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, in Miami Gardens, Fla.

GAMES OF CHANCE

The Pro Bowl is back after the first 17-game regular season in NFL history, and the league chose to host it in Las Vegas on the same weekend as the NHL All-Star Game and several smaller sporting events in Sin City. Attendance at practices has been fairly light, and the game at Allegiant Stadium is not expected to be a sellout.

The players are not complaining about spending a weekend in Sin City, even when temperatures haven't climbed much above 60 degrees in the high desert.

"I think probably more people lost their money, so it might actually be a little more competitive than you think," Kansas City offensive tackle Orlando Brown Jr. said with a laugh. "I think it'll be fun. I think it'll be a competitive game. It's got that Pro Bowl feel to it."

CAN'T KICK IT

In the NFL's latest attempt at innovation that also increases player safety, the Pro Bowl will have no kickoffs.

Instead, the winner of the opening coin toss will have two options: to spot the ball anywhere on the field for the first play, or to decide whether to start on offense or defense from the other team's chosen spot.

The so-called "spot and choose" method was suggested to the league's Competition Committee last year by the Baltimore Ravens partly as a solution to the inequities of the current overtime system.

DIGG IT

Buffalo receiver Stefon Diggs could line up for the first time against his younger brother, Dallas cornerback Trevon Diggs.

Their teams haven't met since Trevon reached the NFL last season, but Vegas fans could be treated to the first matchup of the Bills' prolific wideout and the rising defensive back whose 11 interceptions were the most by an NFL player since Everson Walls in 1981.

NEW TOOLS

Smart young players are using the Pro Bowl week as a chance to get to know their competitors in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere — while also picking up knowledge for the future.

Pittsburgh receiver Diontae Johnson, a first-time Pro Bowler as a late replacement, is absorbing everything on his first trip to Las Vegas.

"You can learn a lot, because everybody didn't get here for no reason," Johnson said. "I was just over there talking to Travis Kelce about how he reads a defense and how he runs his routes, how he extends people. He's given me some pointers, and I feel like I can add that to my toolbox. I feel like I can learn from everybody out here."

NFL to bolster inclusion policies, probe tanking allegations

By ARNIE STAPLETON
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell told teams Saturday the league will look to bolster policies meant to encourage hiring of minorities, particularly as head coaches, and he pledged an investigation into tanking allegations raised by Brian Flores in his discrimination lawsuit against the NFL.

"We will reevaluate and examine all policies, guidelines and initiatives relating to diversity, equity and inclusion, including as they relate to gender," Goodell wrote in a memo to the league's 32 clubs that was obtained by The Associated Press.

The commissioner added that the league's record on hiring minority coaches has been "unacceptable."

The memo came five days after Flores sued the league and three teams over alleged racist hiring practices for coaches and general managers, saying the league remains "rife with racism" even as it publicly condemns it.

The NFL's main avenue for increasing diversity in its leadership ranks is the two-decade-old Rooney Rule, which requires teams to interview minority candidates for jobs including head coach and general manager. Despite the rule, there is currently one Black head coach in the league: Pittsburgh's Mike Tomlin. There are no Black team owners, just a handful of Black GMs and relatively few Black coordinators in a league where more than 70% of players are Black or another ethnic minority.

Goodell said the league will include outside experts in its review along with "current and former players and coaches, advocates and other authorities in this area. Our goal is simple: make our efforts and those of the clubs more effective so that real and tangible results will be achieved."

In a statement, Flores' attorneys said while Goodell's memo appears to be a positive first step in confronting systemic racism in the league, they "suspect that is it more of a public relations ploy than real commitment to change."

Flores, who is Black, was fired as Miami's coach last month despite back-to-back winning seasons. He named the league and three teams — the Dolphins, Denver Broncos and New York Giants — in a class-action lawsuit this week alleging unfair hiring practices in the NFL.

After the lawsuit was filed, the league said it would defend itself against claims it said were "without merit." The Dolphins, Broncos and Giants also denied Flores' allegations.

Goodell took a softer approach to Flores' claims in his memo.

"We understand the concerns expressed by Coach Flores and others this week. While the legal process moves forward, we will not wait to reassess and modify our strategies to ensure that they are consistent with our values and longstanding commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion," the commissioner wrote.

Flores' most serious allegation is his claim that Ross told him he would pay him $100,000 for every loss during the coach's first season because the owner wanted the club to "tank" so it could get the top draft pick. The Dolphins went 5-11 that year; the Cincinnati Bengals went 2-14 and used the No. 1 pick on quarterback Joe Burrow, who led the team to this season's Super Bowl.

"We also take seriously any issue relating to the integrity of NFL games," Goodell's letter said. "These matters will be reviewed thoroughly and independently. We expect that these independent experts will receive full cooperation from everyone associated with the league or any member club as this work proceeds."

Ross pledged his team's full cooperation into an investigation on Thursday when he labeled Flores' accusations "false, malicious and defamatory."

Flores also contended that the Broncos and Giants conducted sham interviews, Denver's in 2019 and New York's during the current hiring cycle. Critics of the Rooney Rule have long contended that many teams complied with the rule by interviewing minority candidates they had no intention of hiring.

"There's a lot of work to do. I wish there was a quick fix. I wish there was a silver bullet for some of these things," Jacksonville Jaguars owner Shad Khan, who is Pakistani-American, said Saturday. "But I think it says as much about America, frankly, as it does anything else."

The Jaguars had two interviews with Tampa Bay offensive coordinator Byron Leftwich, who is Black, for their head coaching job, but talks with him broke down and Jacksonville hired Doug Pederson, the fifth white coach Khan has hired in as many opportunities as owner of the Jaguars.

Lawyers Douglas H. Wigdor and John Elefterakis, who represent Flores, said they were skeptical that Goodell's memo would lead to meaningful changes and called on a court or government agency to appoint a federal monitor to oversee the league.

"For too many years, the NFL has hidden behind the cover of foundations that were supposed to protect the rights of Black players and coaches, as well as law firms and experts that purport to be unbiased an independent but are paid for by the NFL," the attorneys said in their statement. "All the while, systemic racial bias has festered in the NFL's front offices."

Shaun White says Beijing Olympics will be final competition

BEIJING (AP)—The Flying Tomato wants this to be his final takeoff.

Three-time snowboarding gold medalist Shaun White made it clear Saturday that the Beijing Games won't just be his final Olympics, the 35-year-old American plans to retire from the sport he put on the international map after the halfpipe medal round next week.

"In my mind, I've decided this will be my last competition," he said.

White has been a transcendent force for snowboarding, its most recognizable face for nearly two decades — and not just because of the mop of red hair that inspired his nickname.

Those locks have since been chopped, and White is now an elder statesman for the sport, hobbling into his fifth Olympics after a season marred by an ankle injury, a bout with COVID-19, a late unscheduled trip to Switzerland to secure his Olympic spot and, most recently, a training plan that got thrown off schedule during his stay in Colorado in January.

"I'm sort of pinching myself, with how lucky I am to still be here at this age," he said during a reflective, 45-minute news conference.

White won gold in his Olympic debut in 2006, just the third time halfpipe snowboarding was held at the Winter Games. The sport boomed in popularity with him at the forefront, and he won gold again in 2010 and 2018. He also has 15 X-Games golds—13 in snowboarding and two as a skateboarder.

White will hardly be a favorite for a fourth halfpipe gold when the finals are held Friday. Ayumu Hirano of Japan, who finished second to White in 2018, became the first to land a triple cork in competition in December, and the three-flip trick probably won't be in White's run.

White said he's toggling between trying to enjoy every moment of the last big contest week of his life and knowing there is work to do when the halfpipe opens for training Sunday.

He said he decided he was ready to be done during the buildup to the Beijing Games, a moment that crystalized when he got lost on a mountain during a soul-sucking training stop in Austria in November

AP

United States' gold medalist Shaun White reacts during the men's halfpipe medal ceremony at the Vancouver 2010 Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010.

NMSA opens nomination for board of directors

The Northern Marianas Sports Association is now accepting nominations for its board of directors.

Nine directors will be elected to the NMSA Board at the annual general assembly with Tinian and Rota having one representative each. All nominees must be part of an organized sports body that is duly-recognized by the NMSA. One of the nine directors, to be nominated by the soon-to-be formed Athletes' Commission, will be named Athletes' Representative and must be an active athlete or has represented the NMI in international competitions in the last 10 years.

Nominees must be a resident of the NMI with residency of at least two years upon his/her nomination. He/she must be a board member or officer of a sports body and must be nominated by their respective national federation.

Nominations must be made on national federation letterhead using the NMSA-prescribed format. Nomination packages must include board member nomination and acceptance of nomination declaration forms and a resume of the nominee. Nomination packages may be submitted to NMSA via email at marianassports@gmail.com by Feb. 14, 2022.

Directors will serve a term of four years with their term of office starting on March 31, 2022—the day of the election at the NMSA annual general assembly.

The NMSA is the governing body of sports in the NMI and is in charge of the maintenance and operations of the Oleai Sports Complex. The association provides support to national sports federations and their athletes and officials as they participate in local, regional, and international competitions and implement various programs in the community.

"We are encouraging the different sports federations to participate in this nomination process and take an active role in helping elevate NMI sports to a higher level. We need all hands on deck for us to continue providing opportunities for our athletes and officials, and to promote and develop a sports culture in our communities," NMSA vice president and Northern Marianas Athletics president Ray Tebuteb said.

For more about the board of directors nomination process and the NMSA, contact executive director Carline Sablan at 234-4672 or email marianassports@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

MANCAO

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ronment didn't motivate me to continue. So from there, I stopped running. And then last year, Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. spoke to me about starting Run Saipan. And that's what got me training again," he said.

Christley dominated the women's category with a run of 23:50. She was followed by Rosemarie Chisato and Ann Bang with times of 26:40 and 27:48, respectively.

The 43-year-old Alaska native said like other races she joined in the past, she's just there to have fun with the local running community.

"The run was nice because running brings me joy, a sense of peace. It was fun to run the same race as last year with some familiar faces and new ones too. The weather was agreeable for the run that day. I just run for myself, to beat my own time, beating others is never my goal. My competition is only ever with myself," she said.

The 2nd Marpi Drag Race 5K was named after illegal drag racing activities that used to occur in the area.

"I coined it last year because it was the location of the infamous illegal drag strip from back in the 1990 Tinaki period. Everyone knows it was the illegal racing area back in the day. What better name than to coin it the Marpi Drag Race 5K," said Dela Cruz.

TANIA

From Page 20

I ended up doing it! I guess this shows that if you put your mind to it and believe you could do it, you can," she said in a social media message to *Saipan Tribune*.

Last month, Tan reset her own CNMI 3,000m record with a time of 10:57.58 in the Ramapo Season Opener indoor track at the Armory Track in New York City.

And like the Ramapo Season Opener, she acknowledged that the Metropolitan Championship was also a mental challenge.

"The race was mentally tough though. It was 25 laps because it's a 200m indoor track, so that was also hard. But overall a good race and a good day for our women's team!"

Along with finishing fourth, Tan and the Fordham women won the Metropolitan Indoor Track & Field Championship for the first time in team history.

Northern Marianas Athletics distance running coach and cross country director Dr. Ron Snyder congratulated Tan for another feather in her cap.

"Tania continues to prove that hard work and persistence pay off. I am looking forward to having her home this summer for the Oceanic Championships and the Pacific Mini Games where she will be an excellent ambassador for the CNMI. Go Tania!" he said.

When asked what event Tan will be competing in the upcoming events, Snyder said, "We are still working that out. Probably 3K and 5K. Now we have to see how the outdoor track season goes."

PETER

From Page 20

about to come here they'll start ripping out the track."

Asked about the new timelines for the track and field and the baseball field, Peter said unfortunately because of shipping delays the latter is not expected to be completed until May and the former won't be available until April.

That's bad news for both the CNMI national baseball team and the CNMI national athletics pool. The baseball team, for one, has resorted to practicing at the smaller Miguel "Tan Ge" Softball Field.

"Currently, I'm scrambling on my side to get the national baseball team out hitting. We need a facility for them to scrimmage. Right now they're down to utilizing the Major League baseball field. We're also looking at setting up a batting cage in one of the warehouses. Best case is to set up at one of the warehouses so they can hit every day. The pitching machines are here and the batting cages are not a problem because we only need to build the nets with the cover."

Peter also gave updates for the other Mini Games sports. He said for beach volleyball, they're currently working with the Department of Public Lands, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and the Division of Fish and Wildlife to clear the grounds leading into the four beach volleyball courts at the Crowne Plaza.

"We're also bringing sand from Sugar Dock up to the former Fiesta Resort. Maybe 5 tons to extend the beach at the Crowne Plaza. Most of the equipment for beach volleyball have also been arriving."

Peter said weightlifting is currently training at their Chalan Kiya warehouse and that they're in talk with the Public School System to see if the CNMI Weightlifting National Team can utilize the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

"But MHS also needs a new air-conditioning system and that work is under the Community Block Development Grant."

For badminton, the MGOC is waiting on the new flooring and the new air-conditioning system as well at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

MGOC is also waiting for the approval from the American Memorial Park management for them to use the venue for tennis. The Pacific Islands Club Saipan in San Antonio is the other venue for tennis.

For va'a, Peter said the surveyors have gone out and measured the buoy areas of f the 13 Fishermen Memorial. He added that the rest of V6 canoes are coming in a few weeks and all of the V1s are already here.

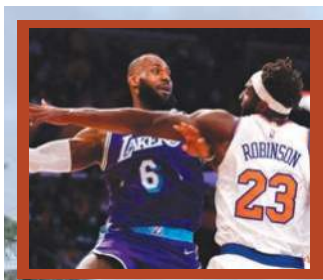
As for triathlon, the multisport event will be held on Rota and the Rota Mayor's Office is making preparations in coordination with local agencies, the MGOC, and Triathlon Association of the CNMI.

He said golf seems to be the least problematic as the venue is already there. "They probably just need to fill in some sand here and there." Golf will be hosted by the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan.

"I'm hoping that all the projects and facilities would be handled and taken cared off by May. The money is there but we need the projects to move. It's just that the materials that are delayed. Everything else, we just want to make sure that our athletes are prepared and hoping for the best," said Peter.

MARK RABAGO

Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chair Marco Peter, left, during a ceremony where the Joeten Daidai Foundation and The Athlete's Foot Saipan signed up as a Platinum Sponsor for the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 at the Joeten Motors Co. Ford-Honda showroom last Thursday in Oleai.



LeBron returns with triple-double, Lakers beat Knicks in OT

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Shaun White says Beijing Olympics will be final competition

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Mancao, Christley top Marpi Drag Race

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Some of the participants of Run Saipan's 2nd Marpi Drag Race 5K last Saturday pose for a group photo in front of the former Mariana Resort & Spa. The men's division was won by Mike Mancao, while Audrey Christley topped the women's.

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

There were no visible skid marks, but Matthew Mancao and Audrey Christley smoked the competition in Run Saipan's 2nd Marpi Drag Race 5K last Saturday.

The run, which started at the former Mariana Resort & Spa, saw 21 participants compete with Mancao the swiftest among the bunch with a time of 22:17. He was followed in the men's division by barefoot runner Chong Nam Lee at 22:28, while completing the Top 3 was Ronald Villafria who crossed the finish line in 23:23.

Mancao said it's been a while since he took part in a Run Saipan event and it was just fulfilling to stretch his legs again.

"The run was very refreshing because it got my heart pumping and I miss that feeling. The last competitive run I took part in was the Inaugural 4th of July Independence Day 2-Mile Race of Latte Built Gym," he said.

The 26-year-old Kautz Glass employee said he probably finished first because the top competitors for long distance didn't take part in last weekend's race.

"I'm familiar with the route because when I competed in my prime days, I did these races a lot. Very interesting because it's a mix between flat and elevated terrain."

Asked why he took a hiatus from running, Mancao revealed it was a combination of a lot of factors that made him take a break from his favorite sport.

"When I went to Guam in 2015, I was trying to train but the conditions and envi-

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Peter: Hoping for the best

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chair Marco Peter remains optimistic that repairs of sports facilities that will be used for the quadrennial event will be completed in time for the start of the Mini Games set from June 17 to 25 this year.

He said the biggest concern are repairs to the Oleai track and field and the Francisco "Tan Ko" M. Palacios Baseball Field, both at the Oleai Sports Complex.

While the projects have already been awarded to USA Fanter Corp. (baseball field) and Tang's Corp. (track and field), Peter said the biggest culprit has been shipping delays of materials.

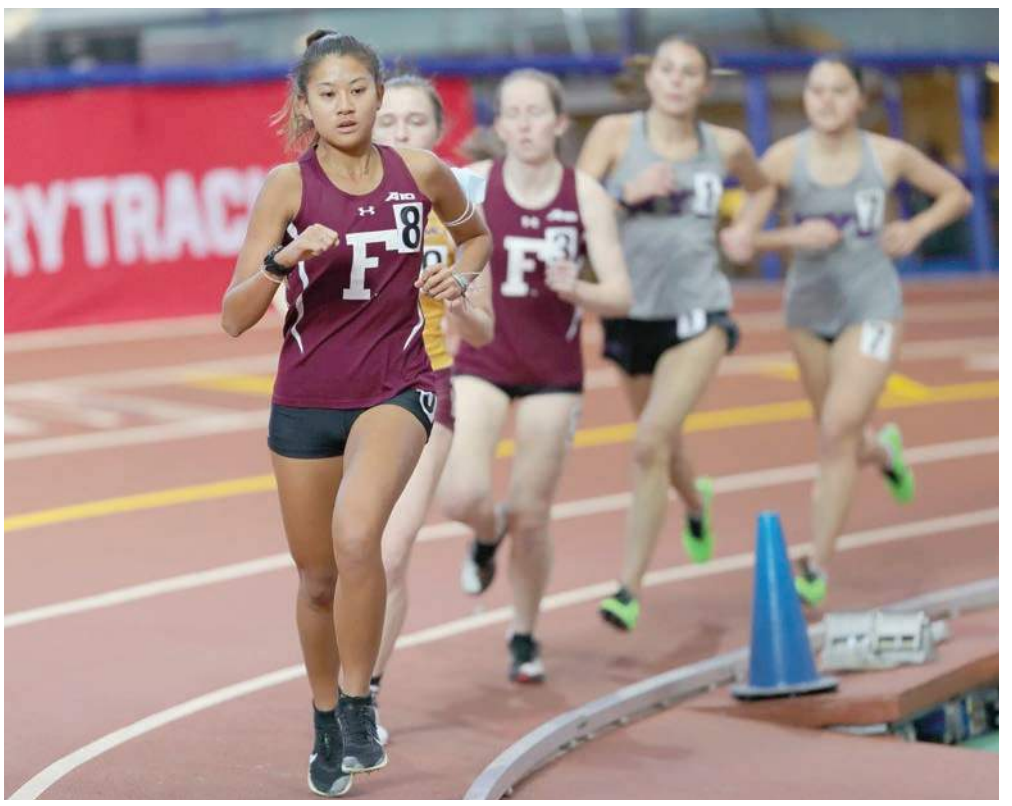
"They've already awarded the projects for the track and field and also the baseball field. Due to the pandemic even the raw materials have been delayed because they come from different countries."

For the meantime, the MGOC chair said Tang's Corp. is just about ready to start repairs at the track and field.

"In a couple of weeks they'll be ripping off the tracks and they will be replacing it so it's going to be off-limits. So we're encouraging the community that once construction starts to stay away from the track and field. The parts are on the way so right when it's

See PETER on Page 19

Tania sets 5K indoor CNMI record



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tania Tan, seen here in action in the Ramapo Season Opener, set the first-ever indoor 5K CNMI record during the Metropolitan Indoor Track & Field Championship last weekend at the Ocean Breeze Athletic Complex in New York.

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Tania Tan has set the first-ever indoor 5K CNMI record and also the fastest recorded time for a women's 5K—either inside or outside—in the Commonwealth during the Metropolitan Indoor Track & Field Championship last weekend at the Ocean Breeze Athletic Complex in New York.

The 20-year-old Fordham University junior ran the 5K race with a time of 18:52.21 while finishing fourth in the competition.

"My goal for this race was to actually break 19 minutes in the 5K. I've never even broken 20 minutes officially before that, so this was a big goal, but with how I was doing in workouts, I was feeling like it was possible. And

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